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THE VICTORIANS, GOD BLESS THEM!

by Douglas Bush

DURING the last twenty years or so the word "Victorian" has been an indispensable weapon of offence. Any person or idea that one dislikes can be annihilated by a mere hint of the opprobrious term. If two advanced moderns are in debate, victory lies with him who can say it first. Cautious and judicial persons may feel some hesitation in the promiscuous use of a single word which sums up the infinite variety and complexity of two generations, which describes an age containing Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce, Matthew Arnold and Martin Tupper, Newman, Thomas Hardy, Carlyle, Swinburne, Herbert Spencer, Lewis Carroll. But most cautious and judicial persons are professors, and they don't matter. At any rate the word has been used so much that it has acquired a quite definite and substantial meaning. The Victorians were unanimous in all their opinions, and can be arraigned as one man—or rather as one old woman—before that supreme tribunal, the modern intelligence. We all know that composite abstraction called the Victorian mind as well as if it had been on view at Madame Tussaud's. The Victorian notion of marriage, for instance, was so simple that it can be put in a phrase and condemned in a sentence by such modern liberals as Bertrand Russell and Dorothy Dix.

This reprehensible abstraction, the Victorian mind, is of course surveyed from different levels of competence; I am speaking only of hostile surveys. At the top is the subtle artistry and delicate malice of Mr. Lytton Strachey, who, as I think Augustine Birrell observed, is in the happy situation of an admired author not yet severely scrutinized by his juniors—although of late some scholars have been exposing the kind of gratuitous and imaginative untruth which enters into Mr. Strachey's satirical portraits. At the bottom of the scale are the more or less journalistic commentators on life who write on the assumption that history began with the day of their birth, and that all irritating and distasteful ideas were the personal invention of Queen Victoria. On the basis of many scattered utterances one might assemble

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a composite indictment, which would run something like this: Victorian literature was largely pink pills for pale people, a tissue of hypocritical compromises and evasions; it was smugly materialistic, smugly optimistic, mawkish, sentimental, timid, prudish, untrue to life. Other items might be added, but these will serve for a hasty glance.

Well, in Victorian literature one can certainly find chapter and verse in support of all these charges. For Macaulay, said Emerson, "good" means good to eat, good to wear, The remark is not fair to Macaulay, but he will do to hang up as a scalp representing the faith of complacent Whiggism. Were not the Victorians always throwing out

> . . . acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
> With, at every mile run faster, O the wondrous, wondrous age?

Smug optimism? Students who could not quote another line of Browning know that he declared

> God's in his heaven,
> Dinner's at seven,
> All's right with the world,

or words to that effect. Mawkishness? Tennyson supplies abundant examples. Two lines from *Crossing the Bar* have been thus revised in the spirit of modernity:

> And I shall meet Him face to face,
> As gentleman to gentleman.

In *Œnone* when the three goddesses have appeared to claim the prize of beauty from Paris, the speech of the disrobed Pallas is so morally edifying that one has an uneasy fear of having come on Queen Victoria in her bath. Her maxims have been slightly altered by Mr. Chesterton:

> Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
> These three alone will make a man a prig.

But Tennyson's infelicities need no parodist; the poet can do the job himself. A despairing sceptic feels his faith re-established when he beholds this sight on Sunday morning:

> On to God's house the people prest;
> Passing the place where each must rest,
> Each enter'd like a welcome guest.
>
> One walk'd between his wife and child,
> With measur'd footfall firm and mild,
> And now and then he gravely smiled.
>
> The prudent partner of his blood
> Lean'd on him, faithful, gentle, good,
> Wearing the rose of womanhood.
>
> And in their double love secure,
> The little maiden walk'd demure,
> Pacing with downward eyelids pure.
>
> These three made unity so sweet,
> My frozen heart began to beat,
> Remembering its ancient heat.

Mawkishness and sentimentality shade into each other—unity so sweet—but for examples of sentimentality proper one may recall the death of little Paul Dombey, or the still more harrowing death of little Nell.

Timidity and prudishness? Everyone knows that the Victorian novelists avoided the facts of life—life has only the one set of facts—never dealt with passion, and, if they dared now and then to use a plot involving immorality the business was swathed in almost impenetrable wrappings and labelled immoral. The Victorian matron of real life, we understand, was no less prudish than prolific, and her husband, whether virtuous or not, was equally strict. When Mrs. Trollope, mother of the novelist, visited America early in the century, a gentleman of Cincinnati said to her with feeling: "Shakespeare, madam, is obscene, and, thank God, we are sufficiently advanced to have found it out". And did not a woman rebuke Martin Chuzzlewit for using such a risqué phrase as "the naked eye"?

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There are some of us who can remember the not very remote time when mothers forbade the reading of *Jane Eyre* until their daughters had at least put their hair up. Thus the Victorian novelists, one can easily prove, were inevitably quite untrue to life. *Vanity Fair* used to be called wicked and cynical. But we have only to compare it with *Ulysses* or *An American Tragedy* to see that Thackeray presents an altogether unreal and unrecognizable world, whereas the world of Joyce and Dreiser is immediately recognized by all of us as the familiar world we live in.

It would not be difficult to gather a multitude of references which would prove the case up to the hilt, and, to mix metaphors, would leave the Victorians not a limb to stand on. But, as Burke might have said, you cannot draw up an indictment against a whole period. By citing great authors at their worst, or bad authors, or political and other bigwigs who were not authors at all, one could paint the Victorians as black, or rather as rose-pink, as one wished. But what a pretty picture of the intellectual and artistic life of our time might be composed by a future historian who assembled the choicest absurdities of our best authors, or our most popular political and philosophical oracles! As we hope to be judged by our best at their best, we might in justice if not in charity look at the Victorians in the same way. Since, for example, some earlier references have set Tennyson on the bad eminence which for many people he still occupies, as mawkish, artificial, weak, provincial, we may remember that he could at times write poetry truly Virgilian in stateliness of phrase and rhythm, in depth and nobility of pathos. Think of the plea of Tithonus to his goddess to be released from the crushing gift of immortality:

> Release me, and restore me to the ground.
> Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave;
> Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn,
> I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
> And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

So, in spite of the heavy indictment, it is possible to feel great respect and affection for an abused century. If one believes, as many young critics seem to, that literature and human wisdom first came into being about 1915, the Victorian age may appear as only a remote, dismal, and slightly ridiculous halting-place in the march of mind. Of course every age reacts violently against its immediate predecessor, and one does not expect tributes of ancestral piety from young men dancing vindictively on the grave of their grandmother. The reaction against some aspects of Victorianism did not, however, begin in the twentieth century, it began about the time when the Princess Victoria ascended the throne. So far as the reaction has been intelligently critical, its effect has been desirable and healthy. Some Victorian reputations have shrunk, others have grown, and we can now see them in a fairly clear perspective. When full allowance is made for all the legitimate charges against the Victorians, it is still true that as you move from decade to decade through the period you find great writers, writers of commanding genius, such as our age has not yielded. We have nowadays a vast number of good writers, many distinguished ones, but of greatness, greatness that will remain for posterity, there is not much to be seen.

But we may return to the list of Victorian crimes and consider them in a little more detail. First of all there was smug materialism, faith in machinery and the fruits of the industrial revolution. By those of our own age who are in revolt against the domination of machines the nineteenth cen-

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tury is often blamed for not stemming or altering the course of the tide. Certainly a great mass of Victorian people, including manufacturers, members of Parliament, and such, had unlimited faith in the possibilities of a mechanical Utopia. Believing that God had destined England to be the workshop of the world and themselves as managers thereof, they were in the habit of confusing material with spiritual advancement. But at the present time the same classes of people are of exactly the same mind as complacent Victorians. It would be hard to find any Victorian utterance more naïve than this little hymn of faith, a random choice from among the daily messages of the sage of Northampton, Massachusetts:

> . . . These influences [ready-made clothing and shoes, standard house furnishings, automobiles, good roads, the radio, the motion picture] have supplemented the schoolhouse in banishing ignorance. They have stimulated and unified the thought of the people, broken down sectional prejudices and welded us all into one nation.
>
> They are outstanding examples of how commercial activity ministers to the spiritual welfare of the people.
>
> Diligence in business has carried us to a higher mental and moral plane.

But the Victorian men of letters, critics, novelists, and poets, were not blind to what was coming, to what had already come. Carlyle devoted a good part of his thirty volumes to apocalyptic thunders on the evils of competitive industrialism. Ruskin took the torch from Carlyle, and trimmed it to burn with a somewhat clearer flame. Arnold laboured to make his countrymen see that intellectual vacancy, however conducive to prosperity, was not an ultimate goal. What virtue, he asked, is there in a train which takes one swiftly from an illiberal, dismal life in Islington to an illiberal, dismal life in Camberwell? There was hardly a novelist in the middle of the century who did not give at least one book to an exposure of the wretchedness of industrial slaves. Sinclair Lewis is rightly credited with fixing in one concrete symbol the American manifestation of the gospel of prosperity. But in Victorian sketches of commercial buccaneers the lineaments of George F. Babbitt are clearly discernible. There is Carlyle's Plugson of Undershot, who enlisted his thousand men to conquer cotton, and deposited his hundred thousand pounds at his banker's, while bare backs were worse covered than ever. There is Dickens's Mr. Bounderby:

> . . . a rich man—banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not. A big, loud man, with a stare, and a metallic laugh. . . . A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a balloon, and ready to start. A man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man. . . .
>
> "I am Josiah Bounderby of Coketown. I know the bricks of this town, and I know the works of this town, and I know the chimneys of this town, and I know the smoke of this town, and I know the hands of this town. I know 'em all pretty well. They're real. When a man tells me anything about imaginative qualities, I always tell that man, whoever he is, that I know what he means. He means turtle-soup and venison, with a gold spoon, and that he wants to be set up with a coach-and-six."

Or there is Arnold's Mr. Bottles, who had been educated in the very practical school of Archimedes Silverpump, and who revered his teacher:

> "Original man, Silverpump! fine mind! fine system! None of your antiquated rubbish—all practical work—latest discoveries in science—mind constantly kept excited—lots of interesting experiments—lights of all colours—fizz! fizz! bang! bang! That's what I call forming a man."
>
> "And pray", cried Arminius, impatiently, "what sort of man do you suppose this infernal quack really formed in your precious friend Mr.

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Bottles?" "Well," I replied, "I hardly know how to answer that question. Bottles has certainly made an immense fortune; but as to Silverpump's effect on his mind, whether it was from any fault in the Lycurgus House system, whether it was that with a sturdy self-reliance thoroughly English, Bottles, ever since he quitted Silverpump, left his mind wholly to itself, his daily newspaper, and the particular Baptist minister under whom he sate, or from whatever cause it was, certainly his mind, *qua* mind. . . ."

The Puritan tradition in England and America, some modern economists tell us (perhaps a little too dogmatically), has from the beginning united capitalism and religion in a far from eugenic wedlock. Diligence in business, as Mr. Coolidge says, has carried us to a higher mental and moral plane. Prosperity is the visible sign that all is well with God, and, in the absence of cultural interests, hard work and thrift will lead the zealous Puritan to heaven, or at least to the White House. So we find in the Victorian age that popular optimism concerning material progress is linked with optimism concerning God and the universe. We have already recalled Browning's assurance that God's in his heaven. One sometimes wonders how well Browning is known to the numerous persons who quote those two lines with derision, as if Browning never wrote anything else; have they found such cosmic jollity bubbling through *The Ring and the Book*? But no doubt Browning had considerable faith in God and man. On the other hand Swinburne celebrated God's funeral with juvenile gusto, and Hardy wistfully performed the same obsequies. Among the eminent Victorians there were some religious rebels, many agnostics, many exponents of not quite orthodox Christianity.

But even this will not save them, in the eyes of critical posterity, for several reasons. Although hell had been dismissed with costs, and members of the Church of England deprived of their last hope of eternal damnation, both emancipated and non-emancipated, it seems, made the mistake of identifying religion with the creeds. When the creeds were pulverized, as it appears they were, by geology and biology, the Victorians, thinking their foothold gone, became sad and pessimistic. But, say young people to whom *Sartor Resartus* and *Father and Son* are meaningless, these men did not even understand the real issues, they took science as well as religion in a limited and dogmatic way. The charge that the Victorians had an inadequate conception of science and its full implications has some truth, but it does come rather oddly from a generation which swallowed Freudianism in one eager gulp and is full of undigested science. At any rate the Victorians are damned on all counts. The common Victorian disillusionment and despair seem quaintly unsophisticated nowadays, when such a universal doctor as Mr. Harry Elmer Barnes calls for a new definition of God in the light of modern astrophysics, and when well-meaning liberals like Dr. Fosdick present a faith so stripped of dogmatic encumbrance that they may be thought to have thrown out the baby with the bath-water.

Further, whereas scientific popularizers at the moment assure us that religion is impossible for the modern man, the Victorians generally managed to cherish a faith in some sort of reservoir of spiritual force, a God more ethical than astrophysical, and hence more exacting in regard to the human conscience and human conduct. Browning is repellent to us because he viewed life as a moral gymnasium. Tennyson roused himself from despair to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. Even the more sceptical

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Arnold wasted much energy in trying to salvage some remnants of righteousness from the shattered creeds. The science and philosophy which enveloped Hardy in a twilight of gloom made George Meredith a hopeful son of the morning. While Hardy's pessimism still commands respect, if not so much as it did a few years ago, Meredith's stock remains at a low ebb; for Meredith was unable to curl up before a futile universe, and he preached an odious gospel of inspired sanity, a balanced trinity of body, brain, and spirit. Carlyle, after casting off Hebrew old clothes, was essentially a Calvinist still, proclaiming for fifty years that work and duty are man's salvation in a time of chaos.

No wonder these men are out of date. They did not know that they were on the wrong road, that appeals to heroic effort were quite irrelevant, that some modern psychologists, after studying rats for a decade or two, would be able to scrap man's knowledge of man acquired during a search of twenty-five hundred years. A professor reported a while ago that one of the bright young things under her care laughed merrily over Wordsworth's writing an ode to Duty. "Why," said she, "everyone knows there is no such thing as duty; there are only stimuli and responses." The Victorian Charles Kingsley urged, rather fatuously, "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever"; our age has reversed the precept. We should rub our eyes if we met in a modern novel or play, as we do in Victorian books, characters who think of or practise any such quaint virtue as duty or unselfishness, or are swayed by any motive except ruthless egoism. As for heroic effort, we may remember that the spirit of post-war literature has been summed up in such phrases as futilitarianism, the literature of nerves, of defeat. It is a far cry from *Sartor* or *A Faith on Trial* to the dried voices of Mr. Eliot's hollow men. We may as well acknowledge that in the matter of religious and moral earnestness the Victorians cannot be whitewashed; they belong to an obsolete world.

Thanks to their general optimism and their lack of a critical philosophy of life, the Victorians were inevitable victims of sentimentality. One has only to recall again both love affairs and death-beds in Dickens, Thackeray, and that queen of morticians, Mrs. Gaskell. But are we of the hard-boiled era quite free from spurious emotionalism? The popular formula of the moment corresponds, in everything except nourishing qualities, to an egg—a brittle outside shell, and soft mush inside. The Victorian sentimentalist told you he was going to turn on the tap, made you listen to the water run —it sometimes ran into blank verse—and then insisted that you join him in a bath of pure feeling. The modern, who abhors obvious pathos, calls your attention to the fact that he has his hand on the tap, that he can hardly see it for misty eyes, that he is going to keep his hand there as long as you can stand it, but he simply won't turn it on. That is the method of Ernest Hemingway, the novelist of the hard-boiled, and of their poet laureate, Dorothy Parker, who makes brave little jokes through her slightly gelatinous tears. It is not at all the same thing as the restraint of classic art, for classic art is hard all the way through. At any rate this inverted sentimentality is everywhere in modern writing. The Victorians sentimentalized the helpless, the innocent, the self-sacrificing; we sentimentalize those sinners who are purer than the innocent, those who have lost the world for love.

Love brings us to perhaps the worst of the Victorians' deadly virtues, their ignoring of sex. Dr. Arnold's son declared that conduct

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is three-fourths of life; we are nearer truth in the knowledge that sex is ninety-nine hundredths of life. Not all Victorians, to be sure, were satisfied with reticence; Thackeray's complaint about the prescribed limits is one reminder. But love in Victorian literature does generally lead by orderly stages to a ring and a cradle, or rather one ring and half a dozen cradles. Further, if a cradle preceded a ring it was a sin and not an accident. And in their presentation of what does, with all our emancipation, remain a not uncommon way of life and love, some Victorians are pretty satisfactory.

In their treatment of love Victorians liked a spice of romantic worship and ecstasy, and these elements, which are not always spurious, even within the bonds of matrimony, were not absent from Victorian life —think of the Brownings. By way of contrasting past and present one might quote Christina Rossetti's

> My heart is like a singing bird,
> Whose nest is in a watered shoot. . . .
>
> Because the birthday of my life
> Is come, my love is come to me,

and Mr. Huxley's picture of a fashionable restaurant, with its human bears champing with their gilded teeth, and the priapic revelry of the Negro band mixed with the reeking steam of kidney pie—

> Ragtime . . . but when the wearied band
> Swoons to a waltz, I take her hand,
> And there we sit in blissful calm,
> Quietly sweating, palm to palm.

The contrast is between romance and biology.

As Mr. Huxley is fond of saying, modern literature is at last able to tell the whole truth about life, and what a new and rich harvest the last decade has yielded! No one of course would defend Victorian prudishness, but the modern frankness (O useful word!) which is a violent reaction against it is not the natural and healthy frankness of earlier ages, it is unnatural, self-conscious and hectic. Sex has been treated frankly and honestly by great writers in all times and places, and, being great writers, they were interested in the passions, conflicts, and sufferings of the human spirit, not the sensations of the human body. It requires an artist of the first rank to create such characters and such an atmosphere that a phrase, a silence, makes an impact that could never be approached by pages of over-heated description and dialogue. One may recall such an example as Dante's meeting with Francesca and Paolo: "that day we read no more".

Not only are current treatments of sex preoccupied with its primary phases, they are mainly abnormal and pathological. Run over most of the "important" names of the last fifteen years—Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, O'Neill, and many others, as well as many unimportant names, or, among the newer authors, Robinson Jeffers and William Faulkner. They have more or less of genius, but genius overcast with a lurid eroticism. Mr. O'Neill, for instance, has been an excellent playwright, though some years ago he unfortunately became persuaded that he was a philosopher and metaphysician. In his last play he deliberately invites comparison with Greek tragedy, and comparison merely emphasizes the depth and breadth of the chasm that separates the two. Not, of course, because the play contains two murders, two suicides, an adultery, and three cases of incest, but because of the pathological treatment of pathological characters who have intensity without significance.

To return to Victorian literature, it is not Greek drama, but it is more solidly rooted in normal experience, and hence makes a wider appeal, than the work of the important mod-

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erns. *Ulysses* had to be explained in a huge guide-book, a guide-book so pretentious and solemn that we may sometimes wonder if Joyce and his official interpreter are not pulling our leg. And Joyce's later work is quite beyond elucidation; it is an inevitable *reductio ad absurdum*. Authors young and old, good and less good, like Yeats, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, Conrad Aiken, Jeffers, and many others, are writers' writers, who address a very limited circle of the sophisticated and initiated. When we ponder unintelligible poems by Hart Crane, with the aid of an unintelligible essay on them by Allen Tate, we may decide either that we are hopeless old fogies—which is doubtless correct—or that much current literature has become diseased with inbreeding, that it has, in short, the marks of decadence. The incomparable Gilbert, not the least of the Victorians, pictured the aesthete strolling down Piccadilly with an orchid or a lily in his mediaeval hand. A considerable mass of "important" writing of our time demands another Gilbert.

The name of Gilbert reminds us that one of the great Victorian virtues is rich humour, often mixed, as great comedy is, with pathos, real pathos. No important writer today would dare to be humorous, even if he had the mind. But think of the glorious comedy that spreads out through the pages of Dickens, Trollope, Thackeray, Hardy, to mention only these. The best of Dickens is like great poetry, it cannot be explained or analyzed. He thought of Mr. Pickwick, and there he is, an elderly and immortal fairy in gaiters, beaming upon the world with the eternal warmth and lustre of the blessed sun. And Mr. Pickwick is only the first of a throng of people who, like all great characters, have an independent life quite outside of the books. Or think of the easy, effortless, happily endless comedy of Trollope, one of those artists who are too busy creating to chatter about Art. And he was capable of big scenes, too. Remember Josiah Crawley, the perpetual curate of Hogglestock, when he walked many miles to the palace to confront the bishop and the bishop's wife, and, after enduring much, thundered a phrase never before heard within those walls, "Peace, woman!" Remember too that revealing moment when the bishop sat in his study, alone at last, and prayed that God might keep him from being thankful that his wife was dead.

Or, to leave comedy for the moment, where in modern fiction do you find prose like Thackeray's, prose so rich in associations, so genuinely in the great tradition? Think of Esmond's reflections on the fatal duel, of "the gallant heart, beating a few hours since, and now in a little dust quiescent".

The metaphysical determinism of Hardy is less and less satisfying, even as a poetic framework, but no changing philosophy can touch with decay the vitality and dignity of his rustic characters, whose speech is so rich in flavour and in Biblical diction and rhythms. One can always return—and there is not much current fiction that one can reread—to the Mellstock choir, Gabriel Oak counting the stars, Marty South speaking over the grave of Winterbourne, the elegy pronounced on Mrs. Henchard by the greasy old crone:

> "Well, poor soul, she's helpless to hinder that or anything now," answered Mother Cuxsom. "And all her shining keys will be took from her, and her cupboards opened; and little things a' didn't wish seen, anybody will see; and her wishes and ways will all be as nothing."

These novelists created spacious worlds of their own, peopled with beings more real

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than ourselves. No contemporary novelist, not even Mr. Galsworthy, has done that. Of course it may be said that the moderns are trying, as Mrs. Woolf once said, to catch and delineate something much more difficult and elusive than these Victorian characters. Perhaps, but one cannot see much evidence of that prodigal creative vitality which the Victorians possessed. Of comment on life we have an abundance, for everybody now has a philosophy—even Aldous Huxley has grown heavily didactic—everybody has a subtle technique, everybody can set flowing the stream of consciousness. But are X-ray films of subconscious gropings, impulses, frustrations, a wholly satisfactory advance upon an integrated and living human character, however simple?

Our historians nowadays are scientific and philosophic as the Victorians were not, but few, as literary artists, are even competent. In the Victorian age history was literature, as the names of Carlyle, Macaulay, Froude, bear witness. Recent biography has been in large part a mass of slipshod journalese; the impudent parade of an easy pseudo-psychological formula, a few lively phrases, some scandal, and the trick is done. Let us remember that the three classic biographies which rank next after Boswell are Victorian —Lockhart's *Scott*, Froude's *Carlyle*, Trevelyan's *Macaulay*. Such books do not sentimentalize their subjects, but they do not, on the other hand, leave one asking why such a clever writer chose to write about such obviously contemptible persons.

This is not a sketch of Victorian literature, and it must come to an end. No one would wish modern literature to be like Victorian—that would mean stagnation and death. Nor would any reader wish to slight modern authors, even those certainly not destined for permanence, for they are important simply because they are modern. But, as one advances or declines into middle age, and more disposed to read what one wants to read than to qualify oneself for literary teas, one may, as an unabashed anachronism, prefer Homer's Ulysses to Joyce's, the Electra of Sophocles and Euripides to O'Neill's. In a word, as devotees of the moment would say, one has a senile liking for the old, safe things. So be it. Victorian literature is old and safe. But, if one's occupation is the plumbing of the youthful mind, and if one listened to the reading of Dickens before acquiring the alphabet, one may be rather sorry that the younger generations of the present seem to have missed a good deal. Youth may be more wise and clear-eyed than it ever was before—so we are told—but many young people seem to think that Victorian literature consists of *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Silas Marner,* that Bishop Proudie is connected with the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and that Mrs. Gamp is a prominent hostess of Washington. Well, all they know is what they read in the papers.

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A LETTER FROM VACHEL LINDSAY

NOTE: *The following letter from Vachel Lindsay, which has always seemed to me exceedingly interesting and important—in fact, an invaluable document for any biography—came to me when I lived in Winchelsea, Sussex, in 1922. It needs little explanation. At that time I was preparing an anthology of modern American poetry, the purpose of which was to introduce—if possible—the work of Lindsay and his contemporaries to an English audience which knew very little of modern American literature. Although Lindsay himself was a partial exception to this state of things—for his "General William Booth" volume, and "The Daniel Jazz", had already appeared in England (with an introduction by Robert Nichols) and he had also given recitals in London and Oxford—it will be seen from the letter that he emphatically resented what he considered to be a total misconception of the real character of his poetry, and was very anxious, in England as in America, to correct that misapprehension. The critical judgment of the future may or may not endorse Lindsay's own estimate; for the moment that is of no great importance. What is important, here, is the poet's very frank annoyance at the freak of destiny which compelled him, against his will, to accept a rôle which he assures us he had not deliberately sought. He repudiates "jazz"—asks me to omit "The Congo" and "all poems of that type"—prefers to be represented by other, and quieter, things. . . . For the rest, I think I need only point out to the reader Lindsay's beautiful and quite unstudied generosity with myself. Only a year before this letter was written, I had reviewed very severely, in the "Chicago Daily News", "The Chinese Nightingale". While I suggested that the title-poem was perhaps the best thing he had done, I went on to say that I felt, throughout the book, the signs of a decay in poetic power which might well prove to be final. How many poets, in these circumstances, could have refrained from some hint, however faint, of reproach? But in Lindsay, not a word: he leaves the critic his independence, just as naturally and simply as he seeks and preserves his own.*—CONRAD AIKEN.

* * *

The O. Henry Hotel
Greensboro, N. C.
April 28, 1922

MY DEAR CONRAD AIKEN—

I was pleased and flattered to get your letter today and answer at once, as I wait for the 4:30 A.M. train to take me further south.

Now as an act of fraternal good will—let me ask you to make up my section of the book omitting *The Congo* and all poems of that type. They have utterly misrepresented my point of view and distorted my whole public life. I have endured, rather than consented, to be represented in England by a volume with *The Daniel Jazz* for a title-poem. The English Public does not yet understand that I use the word Jazz ironically, have always hated Jazz and always will, and considered *The Daniel Jazz* a mere after-dinner skit, and was utterly disgusted, really horrified beyond words, to find it used as the title-poem of the English Book when I arrived in England. I have for the most part

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refused to recite it ever since, and for the most part omit all verses that approach it in type.

Practically all my life has been spent as an art student and lecturer on art. Few of the poets and critics of poetry know this, because the Art World and the Poetry World are so separated in this country as far as mere "public life" goes. I have set myself for the rest of my life to make my pen-and-ink pictures the first consideration. I was never very much interested in poems to be recited, or in reciting. That has been for the most part —the public—not me.

I know this seems incredible to you, but I hope to prove it out before I die. I have put into circulation for the last fifteen years pamphlets of pen-and-ink drawings, at my own expense. Every time I put my entire bank account into the venture and went into debt from one year to three in the enterprise. "The public" does not know this because the pamphlets were for the most part gratuituosly distributed and for the most part in my own town with no august publisher's imprint. I am going to take the trouble to write my biography as I see it for you tonight, before I catch that train. My first schooling —at six—was with a private drawing teacher, and even then it was assumed I was to be an artist. Then the three years at Hiram College—I illustrated the College Annuals, kept notes on the history of Japanese Art and made orations on the relation of Art to Democracy, and the meaning of the doctrines of Ruskin. Then I put up the fight of my life, broke away from college and studied four years at the Chicago Art Institute, taking the equivalent of four years of college, grinding away at the usual courses in drawing from the nude, studying cast, picture-composition, et cetera, and stuffed myself like a stuffed tomato on the History of Painting in the Ryerson Library. Then I attended Art School in New York under William Chase and Robert Henri at the same time George Bellows and Rockwell Kent attended. The appearance of their drawings in the May *Century Magazine* is more of an event with me than any poetic event. Kent has written and illustrated a book. The *literary* critics have ignored it. Why? Because they assume the Art Critics talk about the Drawings in it, and that will be enough. They do not realize he wrote the book as a challenge to literary critics as well. My drawing is as close to my writing as is that of Kent—but it so happens I ran into literary critics first. Also I had a "good voice", so people wished onto me a theory of vocalization. I have none. All my theories are of the relation of pictures to poems, and I could talk circles around the imagists on that subject if I chose to do so. Why is it I do not choose? Because—in my mediaeval period I lectured for years and years on it.

In about 1904–7 or 5–8 or along there, every winter I took crowds through the Metropolitan Museum beginning with a little circle, that gradually became a picked set from Chase's, the Art Students' League and the Academy. Most of that crowd have won their place in the Art World somewhere by now. And I am on my way back to them and you will see me rejoining them by Sept. 1923 when my first large portfolio of drawings for all the world comes out! That is—with a publisher's imprint.

I have been doing pen-and-inks all along —and this new portfolio is almost done. I lectured for that crowd in the Metropolitan once or twice a week through those winters and gave the rest of my energy to studying the history of all the main exhibits in the Metropolitan Museum—and giving myself up to pen-and-ink drawing, and I have never quit drawing. About one third of my poems —including the early moon-poems which I

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think you prefer among my verses—were written for pictures. The very first poem I ever wrote the picture and verse came together.

And the general preoccupation with the subject of the visible arts may be indicated by the list of three books: (1) *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty;* (2) *The Golden Book of Springfield;* and (3) *The Art of the Moving Picture.* All these are from the standpoint of a student and lecturer on Sculpture, Painting and Architecture. The Movie Book has gone into a new edition with 40 new pages—May 18. The Denver Art Association writes the preface and promises to use the book as a tract and give the theory a practical try-out in the Studio. This is a real, if shadowy victory.

I flatly deny I have ever said most verse should be recited. I maintain—to the contrary—that 90 percent of poetry is inscriptional, and written for the inner ear, and should be so. I maintain that 90 percent of my own verse is inscriptional, and written for the inner ear. But both the public and the critics, discovering I was born with a singing voice, have insisted the 10 percent of my verse adapted to vocalization is all I have written. They would rather listen than read.

And now we come to the point. Perhaps it is *all I have done that will ever meet any one's approval,* that vocal poetry. But approved or not—a man must live his life—and fight his battle. And I say now for the thousandth time—I am far more interested in my neglected-by-the-public inscriptional verses, written to fit my pictures, and written for the inner ear, than in the poems adapted to my own rather harsh voice. I am only mildly interested in reciting.

But my dear friend—no one buys my books. I have to lock myself up to escape the crowds determined to make me recite. After a long and careful lecture on the History of Art someone rises from the Back of the House saying, "Now that Mr. Lindsay is through airing his hobbies will he please recite *The Congo*?"

The Art and Poetry worlds are so separated in America that this tale seems incredible to you. But my dear friend I took the train from Omaha, Nebraska, to Denver two months ago—just to spend one more evening drawing from life with a little gang of Art students there, I had just met, and we had the time of our lives, and nobody asked anybody to recite anything.

All this sounds utterly ungrateful to the people who have taken an interest in my verses—but I assure you I felt more at home than I have for ages, though I put up a mighty poor life-drawing.

After lecturing for years and years on Art, and giving about equal attention to every central period, including American Sculpture, Architecture and Painting, I grew weary of hitting the seven bull's eyes of the seven great periods and decided to be honest with myself—and admit I had always loved Egypt the most—and go into it more deeply and thoroughly. Long before Wells wrote it, I had given all Wells's "outline of history" in my own fresh and sketchy way year after year, from the standpoint of mere spectacle. At last I was honest with my own heart—and admitted Egypt was my land. I spent last April, May and June alone in the Metropolitan Museum—"digging in" again—reviewing all the old familiar line of march again—and specializing on Egypt—and the only three books I have carried on this year's recital tours are three Egyptian Grammars. Not that I will ever *read* Hieroglyphics—but I will get enough to draw them with a kind of intelligence. My years of talking on Egypt make a few of them quite clear, certainly.

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I expect to continue next year—Oct. 1922–June 1923—reciting in every state in the union—and for every English Department that will let me in. It is my sole source of income. No one will buy my books. But in the hotels alone I draw more and more pen-and-inks, and I shall spend July-Oct. 1922 on them, and from Oct. 1923 on I will probably be back where I belong—among the Art Students forevermore.

You are in the critical field constantly, and I am never there when it comes to verse. You have always tried to do me justice, yet I have always felt you never sensed for a moment I considered myself first of all a veteran Art Student, however poor a workman. Please feel free to quote as much or as little of this letter as you please, though I assure you it was not written for publication, but for you, personally. Your good will and your understanding mean much to me. You are that rare combination—a man of honesty, courage and true fighting instinct in the critical field.

The Chinese Nightingale has not been published in England anywhere. I suggest, if you need more material, you print a selection of the *Moon-Poems*. Most of them were written for pictures, and I will be glad if you care to say as much. *The Queen of Bubbles*—was written for a picture of mine—and the first poem [I] ever had published—printed in *The Critic*—ages ago.

Chatto and Windus only imported 500 copies of the Insides of the *Booth* volume and that was out of print when I reached England. *The Daniel Jazz* volume—with the title I so much abhor—hardly sells at all, and these are the only two that represent me in England. *The Jazz* volume is sold by George Bell. I suggest you print *The Nightingale* because it is not in either of these volumes.

All these I send you are from *The Chinese Nightingale* volume. I have no others by me.

I will send you another bunch in a few days.

Most fraternally,

(*Signed*) NICHOLAS VACHEL LINDSAY

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REMARKS BY DR. JOHNSON ON CERTAIN WRITERS

OF THE PRESENT AGE, COLLECTED BY J—M—S B—SW—LL, ESQUIRE

by Hugh Kingsmill

A VERY erroneous notion has been encouraged, alike by persons eager to exhibit the great Samuel Johnson as the victim of illiberal prepossessions, and by others who wish to claim his exalted authority for their own contracted views, that he was an enemy without discrimination to all the writers of the present age. Let those who have extended a heedless welcome to this notion reflect on the gross absurdity of supposing a man of Johnson's nice judgment and unvarying candour to be capable of including the enthusiastick, but truly innocent and pious Mr. Chesterton, and the polite and ingenious Mr. Galsworthy (against whom malice itself can urge no severer reproach than that his writings are too seldom illumined by the light of revealed religion), in the same condemnation with those odious wretches whose indecent ravings, issuing from the stews of the Gallic capital, are even in this licentious age forbidden ingress to our shores. Yet, since it is in the character of the human mind to be more firmly persuaded by authentick details than by general considerations, it is with high satisfaction that I now adduce in support of my friend's liberality of judgment the evidence of his own written and spoken words.

The circumstances which furnished me with the communication I am now to exhibit may be briefly reviewed. A young gentleman of my acquaintance, being desirous of commencing author, was advised by his mother, a lady who united exalted rank with an uncommon regard for wit and learning, to consult with me on the writers of the present times most proper to select as models for imitation. In my zeal to serve my youthful friend, and without the least apprehension that an unfavourable construction could be placed on my application, I at once wrote to Johnson, soliciting in the most respectful terms the favour of his remarks on this topick. I do not think it necessary to give his reply, which quite confounded me with its extraordinary warmth, and in which he charged me with using the young man as a cover for my own curiosity. Yet, while I repel its immediate reference, I cannot forbear to transcribe one sentence, for its vigour and admirable expression. "He who plays the politician with his friends (Johnson wrote), will find himself at last in a despised and unpitied solitude."

Conscious that my intentions had not been improper, I wrote again, defending myself against his suspicions of me, and expatiating with sincere anxiety on the dangers which threatened my young friend in his perambulation of the modern maze, were he denied the wise and pious direction of Dr. Johnson.

To this appeal, my venerable friend replied immediately, in a letter which needed only to be completed to answer my highest expectations. I omit the first paragraph, in

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which I perceived with distress that the fumes of mistrust still lingered.

". . . Yet would I not (Johnson wrote) wittingly evade any duty, which I believed myself competent to discharge. In the supposition, therefore, that you report aright your friend's anxiety for my direction, I subjoin the following observations on the writers whom you particularly mention. The comprehensive survey of modern letters which you solicit, I have not the knowledge, nor, had I the knowledge, would I have the strength to supply. I am much out of health of late, and must pay for watchful nights with a lethargick stupour by day. All exertion has become hateful to me; nor shall I easily be persuaded that your friend has derived a benefit from this communication proportioned to the pains with which I write it.

"My observations follow the order of your enquiries. Let not your friend be seduced by the present extended fame of Bernard Shaw. Shaw was much talked of before he was read, and he who owes his renown to curiosity will forfeit it when curiosity is satiated. Shaw's notions startle the vulgar, but do not persuade the wise. To rail at the order of society may solicit the attention of the idle, or kindle in weak minds a hope of changes, to be effected they know not by whom, and to comprise advantages, which wisdom knows to be unattainable, and which virtue would reject, could they be attained. The credulous, the greedy, and the licentious, may welcome in the exclaimer against the unequal distribution of wealth, or the restrictions of the domestick system, a benefactor of mankind. But he who has learned to measure the imperfections of our present state, will attend no other improvement of his lot than what he can himself effect, by disciplining desire and abating expectation. He will reserve his praises for those who furnish in their own lives an example of the degree to which passion may be subdued by reason, and interest by benevolence. He will repel with disgust the claim laid to our wonder and gratitude by persons who are too busy with schemes of reforming others to reform themselves.

"Yet, in condemning the general position of Shaw, I must not forget what is to be said in his extenuation. The laxity of his notions finds no counterpart in his practice. Shaw is a discreet and decent liver, who perceives without sharing the passions of ordinary men. His doctrine is licentious only because his desires are weak. The mildness of his disposition persuades him that passion would flow calmly, were it permitted to flow unconfined; and that the disorders of society proceed, not from natural depravity, but from an impatient disgust with restraints, which he rejects for others because they are not needed by himself. With this disgust, he swells out the prefaces annexed to his plays; here clamorously demanding that the accumulations of the prudent shall be opened to the spoliation of the needy, there railing at the grossness of the marriage bed, and exalting the couch of occasion and caprice. But Shaw's frenzy is of the mind alone. His notions are vehement, his feelings are cool. To the characters in his plays he cannot impart what he lacks himself: they have nothing of passion, and little of life. Among his lesser personages, some may be found who are despicable, and others who are imbecile; but the principals neither excite horror by depravity, nor raise admiration by heroic excellence. They have little to perform, and perform that little with the languor of amiability. When they are merry, it is with their author's wit: when they contend, we are privy to Shaw disputing with himself. It is

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a strong proof of Shaw's distance from passion, that he is unwilling to image in his plays the crimes which he denounces in his prefaces. Who that credits the observations annexed to *The Doctor's Dilemma* would not choose the services of a hangman before those of a physician? Who that reads the play would not exchange for a couch of sickness cheered by such physicians the unfeeling commerce of real existence? Nay, even those crimes which Shaw applauds in the study, he will not exhibit on the stage. The wife in *Candida* reconciles inclination and decency by preferring her husband to her lover.

"Of Wells, the next name in your enquiry, I have read little; and that little I have not liked. The heroes of his fictions are disgusted with society, but society was first disgusted with them. They have much lust, and little learning; yet seek neither to abate their desires, nor to supply the deficiencies of their knowledge. The contempt which they provoke in others they retort with the malignity of impotence; their existence is an alternation of gross pleasures and uneasy repinings; and they are happy only in the imagination of novel societies, where ignorance shall be rewarded with power, and the reproach of vice be lost in the extermination of virtue.

"My asthma is very afflictive. The posture of writing is not agreeable to it, and I must seek relief in terminating a letter, which in my present state I had been wiser not to begin. What I had to say of Chesterton and Belloc must wait for a more favourable hour. Persuade your friend to their perusal. He will discover in them, what the young will not easily believe to exist, an union of wit and piety. But let him not run back with Chesterton and Belloc to the Middle Age, to find among barbarians the perfect model of government. If the young man's political notions are unsettled, I would have him read the Dean of St. Paul's, who will teach him the duty of submission to constituted authority. I speak of political authority, I speak not of ecclesiastical, nor theological. There is a strange laxity in the Dean in regard both to the discipline and the doctrine of the Church. He distresses me greatly. It is an ill example, and has too much an air of wantonness, when a dignitary of the Church searches the heathen philosophers for arguments to reconcile him to the Christian faith. I can write no more.

"I am, dear Sir, your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON."

I had not long received this letter, when a sudden call of business obliged me to go to London, whither I set out with much uneasiness, my wife having been very low over some weeks with an internal disorder. I arrived on Saturday, December 17th, and next morning visited Johnson, whom I found sitting at his tea. He looked pale, and had a difficulty with his breathing; but received me very civilly, and was soon conversing in his customary forceful and animated style. I thanked him very warmly for the valuable communication with which he had favoured me, and expressed my regrets that I should have troubled him at so unseasonable a moment. JOHNSON. "Your regrets had been stronger had you not troubled me." BOSWELL. "Sir, I beg you to believe. . . ." JOHNSON. "Sir, you meant to trouble me, and I allowed myself to be troubled." BOSWELL. "On my way to you, Sir, I encountered Mr. Wells, who pressed me very obligingly to visit him at Easton Glebe, which, you know, is his country estate." JOHNSON. "I know nothing of Mr. Wells." BOSWELL. "I regret his principles, but he is a very agreeable man. I think him more zealous for knowledge than you

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allow." JOHNSON. "Then he hides his zeal in his writings." BOSWELL. "Have you not read his Universal History, Sir?" JOHNSON. "I have not." BOSWELL. "It was first issued some years since, in fortnightly numbers, which were very liberally displayed by the booksellers. I wonder you saw them not." JOHNSON. "I saw them." BOSWELL. "But were you never tempted, Sir, to indulge your curiosity with the purchase of a number?" JOHNSON. "I was not, Sir." BOSWELL. "I purchased each number on its appearance." JOHNSON. "I believe you, Sir." BOSWELL. "There is a real appetite for knowledge in the book. I am satisfied, Sir, that had you looked into one number, you would not have been content to miss the others." JOHNSON. "Sir, I could never feel myself obliged to pay a man to conduct his education in public."

This was a sharp stroke; but I was determined to persevere in Mr. Wells's behalf, having long grieved in secret at my venerable friend's obstinate refusal to acknowledge any merit in an author, whose writings, strongly though I censured them in certain particulars, had often cheered and instructed my leisure hours. BOSWELL. "Will you not grant, Sir, that Mr. Wells has performed a useful service by his persevering encouragement of the science of aeronauticks?" This was an unlucky remark. Dr. Johnson was at no time a friend to flying, and the conjunction of this topick with the name of Mr. Wells now put him into visible displeasure. He began to roll violently about in his chair, which put me into confusion, so that with my next remark I precipitated the discharge which I was endeavouring to avert. BOSWELL. "Might it not be permissible, Sir, to view Mr. Wells as an unconscious agent of Divine Providence, whose intention it may be that mankind shall so perfect itself in the science of aerial transport as to carry to the other planets of our system the blessings of true religion?" JOHNSON (puffing hard with passion). "Sir, you are indecent!" BOSWELL. "My dear Sir!" JOHNSON. "To prescribe to Divine Providence! To—" BOSWELL. "Pray, Sir, pray!" JOHNSON. "To connect a barren and mischievous invention of presumptuous rascals—" BOSWELL. "I do assure you, Sir." JOHNSON. "Hold, Sir! I *will* speak! What, visit me with the express intention to bait me with a person, who—" Here he became so violent, with such intemperate vehemence of abuse, beyond anything I had ever experienced in his company, though I had often enough been so unlucky as to attract his resentment, that I sate quite stunned; nor, I verily believe, had my head been the price of my silence, could I have summoned up resolution to interpose one word in extenuation of my conduct, which I was nevertheless conscious had been actuated by no improper motives. An awkward silence followed this tremendous discharge, and I was turning over in my mind how I could take my leave without an appearance of incivility, which I was most eager to avoid, when I perceived lying on the table, the newly issued pamphlet on Oliver Cromwell by Mr. Hilaire Belloc. Knowing Johnson's detestation of the usurper, and how highly he valued Mr. Belloc, I seized this lucky chance, as I deemed it, of leading him back to a better humour. BOSWELL (pointing to the pamphlet). "Sir, this is a very excellent piece of writing." JOHNSON. "Sir, it is a very miserable piece of writing." BOSWELL. "Indeed, Sir? How so, Sir? I confess, Sir, that it seemed to me—" JOHNSON. "Sir, Belloc would have us despise for a fool a man whose parts were no less extraordinary than his wickedness." BOSWELL. "But, Sir, is that not Mr. Belloc's art?" JOHNSON. "I don't understand you, Sir."

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BOSWELL. "Why, Sir, with your extended experience of mankind, you must allow that men will sooner leave admiring a fool than a villain." JOHNSON. "Sir, I need neither your words nor your example to instruct me that the vanity of men is stronger than their virtue, that they will rather be detested for venerating crime, than ridiculed for applauding folly. But Belloc, Sir, is a good man. I did not expect from Belloc that he would aim at the vanity of his readers, when it was his duty as a Christian to arouse their loathing of criminality." BOSWELL. "I think, Sir, that he is a little jealous for his favourite, Bonaparte, whose abilities he will not have lessened by a comparison with those of Cromwell. And, indeed, of the two, I suppose Bonaparte will generally be allowed to be the more remarkable." JOHNSON (angrily). "Sir, this is not your opinion. You say it to vex. Sir, I will not be made your butt!" BOSWELL. "Indeed, Sir—" JOHNSON. "Belloc has French blood. Belloc may be a fool about Bonaparte, if he chooses. (Very warmly.) I know nothing more offensive than adopting another man's opinion, by way of raising a dispute, to gratify a desire of mischief!" BOSWELL. "My dear Sir, I had no such intention; I had not indeed." JOHNSON. "What! a Corsican beggar, a rascal without either judgment or firmness, one who rose to power among a rabble of cut-throats, and maintained himself in power by enterprises each one more lunatick than the last, a wretch who, as soon as he had involved his followers in disaster, abandoned them to destruction, a pitiful scoundrel, who fled to his most detested opponent to beg a refuge from the vengeance of his own disgusted accomplices! And this, Sir, is the fellow you would exalt above Cromwell, a man who wanted nothing of greatness but virtue, a man who achieved everything which he attempted, and grasped nothing which he did not retain." BOSWELL. "But, Sir, are you not imitating Mr. Belloc in reproaching rather the folly than the wickedness of an opinion, in which you do not yourself join? But (rising) I perceive I have displeased you, Sir; I am unlucky today; I will take my leave." JOHNSON. "Sir, you are insolent. Sir, I have answered a fool according to his folly. Had you wit enough to be wicked, my answer had been very different. Keep your seat, Sir!" (In a towering passion.) BOSWELL. "Sir, I beg you to be calm!" JOHNSON. "I *am* calm, Sir. (With a sudden change of voice.) Why do you provoke me so? It is very ill of you."

I was seized with compunction and, running to my venerable friend, took his hand in both mine, renewing the expression of the extraordinary respect and affection which he inspired in me, and protesting my complete innocence of all intention to displease him. JOHNSON (mildly). "Poh, Sir! That is enough. Take your chair, Sir, and let us converse like rational beings." BOSWELL. "You are too good to me, Sir." JOHNSON (with a complacent smile). "Sir, I believe I am."

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AN AFFIRMATIVE ROMANTIC: PHELPS PUTNAM

by Paul Rosenfeld

PHELPS PUTNAM's new volume* has the high interest of a mature romantic expression. The lyrical and personal poet of *Trinc*, intransigent for all his startlingly realistic imagery and language, high-spirited in all his ironizations of an alien, brutal circumstance, has here presented us with a characteristically romantic vision of American life in the more comprehensive and objective form of the epic. *The Five Seasons* actually constitutes the van of a little heroic poem displaying the romantic motive *par excellence,* that of the search for the unknown form-giver of life into distance and mystery; and sets the ancient quest bravely amid a definitely American circumstance. Its heroic protagonist, Bill Williams, is both the type of the chivalric, scholarly, religious wanderer, homeless amid a magic and ludicrous world, and an ultra-modern American, an engaging aesthetic hobo of bright speed and New England antecedents.

As it now stands, this epic is incomplete. The ten episodes comprised in the slender little volume are fractional, dissimilar in form; and very possibly to be considered more in the way of a prelude to the work than as part of the main body proper. Putnam's baffled, luxurious, inflammable Bill is evidently bound to penetrate many regions of American life and experience, social, political, religious; and the field in which these poems focus him is very largely the erotic one. The various episodes themselves are dissimilar in degree of roundness: *Dream* and *Song About Bill* are far less intensely realized and significant than the grandiose *Words of an Old Woman*, the ecstatic *Daughters of the Sun*, or the biting, macabre and Villonesque *Bill Gets Burned* and *Hasbrouck and the Rose*. And still, they cohere, the group of them, plotting the path of Bill's proud search with the means of verse; and the American language of them conveys the force and worth of the restless ancient impulse in its perennial glamour.

This is not to assert that the representation of the starry motive of the wanderer is the sole virtue of *The Five Seasons*. The career of our young "pilgrim of eternity" has the importance of a poetic stratagem for permitting the forces of the America we know today to come to expression; and that expression is already consummate, wonderful in its appropriate power, bitterness, and viciousness. Particularly important is its subtle, almost indirect indication of the destructiveness of the sexual relation, consequent on the false romanticization of woman by man and by herself, and all too prolific of feminine conceit, egoism and amateurishness, and masculine dependency on woman. Still, the expression of the great romantic motive dominates all other interests, and Putnam's emphasis of it is essentially affirmative: his glorification bearing the weight of the conviction of the mature romanticist. The homeless search in Putnam is not the

* *The Five Seasons* by Phelps Putnam (Scribner's. $2.00).

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painful destiny of an interdicted man, as it is conceived in many tales of wandering. It is an absolute good, a means to life and salvation; Bill is "set free" to penetrate the misty distances.

Like the great classic wanderers, Ulysses and Æneas and Parsifal, Putnam's genial little land-loper is subject to the wrath of an angry power. Who this vengeful deity is, we do not know: she is not directly introduced into the narrative; and our own guess that it is Venus Genetrix is perhaps a very presumptuous one. Still, some sort of malediction evidently rests upon Bill and his America. Some power is adverse to him and his compatriots, and the subject of the present instalment of the little epic, Bill's painful experiences of the principle embodied in the soil and in woman's life, and his final release from the struggle with it, make the feminine identification ventured above appear not entirely unreasonable. It would seem that exploitation of forests and soil and natural and human forces have disposed the Mother vengefully toward the descendants of her ravishers. She has withheld her gifts from the living generation; and man has developed no human strength commensurate to her angry forces. Through the American soil she boasts that she has

> . . . moulded fools in the images of men,
> Making them lovelorn in all other lands,
> Making them desirous with a secret homesickness,
> Uneasy in her arms or in other arms.

She has become deathly; taken virility, purpose and power away. The living wear involuntary sackcloth, and do half-conscious penance for the original sin of ambition, violence, cheap mercantilism, an abnormal way of living. Youth lies amid "the bubbling stench of paralytic dreams", strangulated, unable to "speak aloud its tragic thoughts".

Whoever this angry power actually is—Venus Genetrix, Juno, the Puritan Conscience—and whether she or it constitutes an actual portion of the poet's world or a mere critical phantom, has no immediate significance for us. What has, is the fact that while in the classic wander-poems the nomadization is consequent in the curse of the angry deity, in Putnam's little epic the adverse power is conceived, contrariwise, as unfriendly toward Bill's salutary pilgriming. We meet him first "in Hell", nonplussed, mutilated, in search of fire; and his release from "Hell" is significantly identical with a new start upon his wandering career. The agent of this rebirth is the old cosmic source of motion, the sun, Bill's father. Scornfully, magnificently he burns health back into his bastard, "curling his enormous tongue" about Bill's thighs, promising him his daughters. Bill meets "honour and innocence and lust" and love. Sunwise he is filled with "excess of light": then an erotic tragedy once more casts him into

> A breathless jail, with women at the gates.

Still, the impulse of the search returns; stripped of its amorous interest. Pulling himself together, Bill returns to the sun in quest of "the energy of solitude". And doubly impressive in its nudity, the romantic motive irradiates the close of the tale.

That so slender a volume so clearly defines a pregnant little cosmos is partly due the instrumentality of an economical modern form. Aside from its versification, Putnam's medium corresponds to that of Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and other authors of pluralistic fictions; for the reason that it harmonizes the objective and the subjective on one plane, identifying things and dreams and the contents of consciousness as a single pluralistic reality. This method per-

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mits the concentration of a rich and heterogeneous mass of characteristics in a small compass, allowing swift cross references and associations, and the convergence of divergent perspectives.

Actually Putnam's little epic, at least the instalment of it which he has given us in *The Five Seasons*, resembles a concentrated closet drama far more closely than an Homeric and objective narrative. It is very largely made up of declarative speeches, personal narratives and dialogues, connected and framed by bits of narrative prose and passages of verse, and placed in the mouths of a group of divine, semi-divine and human protagonists related to Bill, variously opposed to him, and variously symbolical of the elements of his existence. Besides the magnificent Bill himself, we hear speak or sing an Old Woman (the female, America), an humble woman, two hung-up married women and a girl who desires to hang with them; Bill's friends, the disenchanted Bigelow Hasbrouck and the unfortunate poet Smollet Smith; Bill's girl, the red-haired favourite daughter of the sun; and last, a chorus of human millions. And besides the speakers, the God Chance appears in dumb show; the sun figures as Bill's confidant; a man named Ames sits in with the drinkers. Bill's narratives describe several off-stage characters such as three minor daughters of the sun, and Orpheus and his bevy of maenads; the Old Woman's her miserable ravishers and bastard spawn. Thus the greater portion of the drama of these clashing characters, their fatal prostrations, the easy threshold they present to pain, poison, death; and Bill's countervailing aspiration and spiritual progress, is chiefly gleaned from the subjective terms of the mirroring awareness presented by the protagonists. Indeed, the actors themselves are no more than silhouetted for us by the author, and left half-objectified in semi-vagueness. The direct descriptions are few, and little of the action transpires before our eyes. We do see Bill with characteristic sensitiveness drop his plow as the American soil begins to bleed, and stand transfixed by the bitterness of the offended Mother. We do see the humble woman sit upon his bed and recount her prophetic dream of him, and see Bill's astonishment and his judicious reversion to unconsciousness. We watch him penetrate the suburb of middle-class marriage in search of fire, see him spontaneously, compassionately moved by the sufferings of the victims of the American Venus, to yield his body as a balm for pain; and watch him retiring, his mind a blister, his flesh all "cowardly with burns" from the pain they have passed on to him; to lie aching all night alone in a hotel room. We see him sitting drinking with his friends and listening to their macabre confessions: they have had a lot to drink, and border on delirium. At morning, the major Daughter of the sun stands nude before her glass, binding her smouldering hair and improvising an ominous little song; and Bill, feigning sleep, hears without understanding. On the New Mexican plateau, Bill casts his hat in the shade of cottonwoods, and steps forth from their shades boldly haranguing his heavenly Father, praising him, insulting him for his niggardly bequest of heroic stuff, and then entrusting himself humbly again to his guidance. He sits with Hasbrouck grieving for his lost girl. Hasbrouck utters his charming wisecracks. Bill's ascetic humour improvises sufficiently to permit him to indite a Rabelaisian justification of his companion in misadventure, the poet Smith. At the last, Bill on a mountain-pass sits tiny on the knees of Chance and asks him a naïve question.

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Chance laughs and his laughter "covers the earth in various waves of change". As sensitive to mockery as ever and readily disconcerted in all his pride, Bill jumps to earth and starts to curse the god. But at that instant, for the first time, he hears the swelling voice of the million-throated human chorus.

But these objective facts are minor; the mirrors tell most. Still, if what we are given chiefly to see remain reflections, we see none the less clearly. However vague and sparingly defined the foreground of the scene may be, the background of mirrors is broad, deep and highly polished. All Putnam's protagonists have learned, suffered and done; they understand and remember; and their minds are charged with a wide human experience. And all of them, with the possible exception of the humble woman, who speaks in parables, are intellectual. Even the humanity of the poem thinks. Indeed, the perceptions composing their various speeches and reflecting the characteristics of their sphere and its rulers, are more frequently cast in the form of ideas, the reflections of sensations and emotions in thinking and reasoning, than in the form of impressions, the director and more violent kind of perceptions. These speakers, or better, the poet who speaks through them, rank more decidedly with the conceptual or metaphysical poets than with the lyrical or imagistic ones. Putnam is a reasoning poet: his mood is frequently argumentative; and he communicates a certain intellectual suspense. *The Five Seasons* is rich in sensations reproduced and worked over. A good deal of the poetry takes the "witty" form of the association of heterogeneous sensations or ideas. Putnam, for example, lets Bill say of his girl

> She was discourteous as life and death
> And kindly as a dry white wine is kind
> On a blowzy summer day. . . .

All his so very "American" language is carefully considered and curiously charged with the fruit of cogitation. Moreover, his work contains, besides the many passages of thought-productive emotion, a number exhibiting emotions born of thinking itself. In the early *Epistle to Mr. Manning and Mr. Walker*, high-spirited confession of the disillusionment of that generation of Puritan rebels, the F. Scott Fitzgerald generation, these emotions were still preponderantly ironical, and we read

> We watched the vaudeville of mental toys.
> We saw the Answers summoned from the air
> By bold magicians of philosophy,
> And cheered the One the father of the Many
> Who would appear to die, be bound and thrown
> To mortify in flames, but after all
> Turned up again, the Universal Penny.
> But when we found the show ran twice a day
> We took our hats and came away,
> Leaving the hopeful and the bitter boys
> To the plausible deceit of their emotions.

Now, in the *Hymn to Chance*, the final episode of *The Five Seasons*, we find a clearer distillation—

> Lord Costumer, the cabinets of our blood
> Have been hung with robes to clothe our naked-
> ness;
> You have given us the burning skin of joy,
> You have turned our feet from circling slavery
> With the brilliance of a dollar thrown in the
> air.
> You have given the close bitter gown of grief,
> The acid lining of our joyousness.
> You have given us spirit, Lord, we are not
> abashed,
> And we have known quietude when our muscles
> moved
> Smoothly in labouring or in love
> And our nerves made harmony of their clamour-
> ing.

It would nevertheless be erroneous to place Putnam entirely in the category of conceptual or metaphysical poets, for the reason

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that his expression of the characteristics of his world is anything but abstract. In all his intellectuality and thoughtfulness, he remains a sensuous, passionate, emotional poet. His ideas are never disconnected from the impressions which assisted them to birth. The bloom of direct perception remains on them. Indeed, a mass of his perceptions are direct, impressionistic and lyrical, conveying the feeling of things with fine immediacy. While he has not the live eye of Williams, Cummings, Stevens, and several other contemporary impressionists, and while his metaphors and visualizations of the object are not the most brilliant components of his poetry, *The Five Seasons* is none the less full of striking figures and visual realizations. The cynical Hasbrouck laughs "like old men in a myth". The major Daughter lays "fair awkward hands" upon Bill's head. America arises

> Gleaming and fresh from the seas,
> —her neck alive with burning jewels of ice,
> —a tall girl with her head at one end of the world
> And her feet at the other, beautiful,
> And fit for the close embraces of the Sun.

The descriptions of the five seasons are pricked with sharp little pictures. And powerful reflections of spontaneously overflowing feelings shine throughout Putnam's poetry. Anger blazes forth at the close of *The Ballad of a Strange Thing*, horror at the close of *Hasbrouck and the Rose*; compassion and sympathetic suffering throughout *Bill Gets Burned*; desire and joy, tenderness and anger, passion and savagery alternately throughout *The Daughters of the Sun*. In fact, the quality of all Putnam's poetry, whatever the degree of its aesthetic perfection, is warmth. Sometimes the temperature is the dry heat of the labouring intellect. More often it is the fire of the entire man. Emotion and thought are never separate in it.

A characteristic eloquence forms these perceptions into grandiose expressions. Putnam has been obliged to make his characters poets, mediums of the sublime, orators of a rhythmic and imaginative language. Plainly American, full of colloquialisms and neologisms, frequently awkward, disposing of vocabularies of seventeen words, and given to talking big and ugly and brutally, these personages are none the less immensely dramatic and articulate. The Old Woman is a thunderous sibyl, Bill an ecstatic if sometimes extravagant rhapsodist, Hasbrouck a superior ironist, and the human millions are prophetically enthusiastic. It is as though his affirmation of his tragic world, his will to let it come to expression, blood, shame, death and all, for the sake of the romantic search it enspheres, had given the poet a voice, or several voices, and the power of participating linguistically in his reality. Derisive or solemn, bitter or erotic, insolent or desperate, Putnam's verse has the force of purity, a trumpet-like forthrightness, an iron clangour. The expression is invariably definite, decided, firm of line: of the whole man, will, thought and feeling. It *is* the whole man attaining his object and triumphantly glad to be arriving. Each word lets us hear the assurance born of consistent experience. The verses gain their effects; wonderfully, too, for they gain them despite the fact that they frequently lack the organization of the greatest poetry, the concentration and unification of expression through rhythm and the musical relation of word to word. You will find little of the royal music of the best of Eliot, little of the sustained lyricism and verbal magic of the best of Hart Crane, little of the faun-like grace of the best of Cummings, in *The Five Seasons*. This is not to say that tightly packed, vigorously swung, melodically continuous passages do not occur

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throughout the slender volume. In the course of the little poem on the summer in New York, for example, we suddenly find

All night machines bear male and female out
To the parks and suburbs where they are not cooled;
All day they sit unthinking of their jobs,
Conscious of underclothes against their nerves.
The manifest derision of all death
Leans fatly out of the window watching the breed
Of previous summers swarming underneath,
And the old man coming home approaches her,
And the race goes on.

Similarly concentrated passages appear in other of the poems: at the close of *Bill Gets Burned* and in the ecstatic stanzas of *The Daughters of the Sun* commencing

It cannot be the truth—
I am a hobo with a low repute. . . .

The content and form of at least two of the five sections of the titular poem are identical, especially those of the macaronic *Winter: New England*. And the *Words of an Old Woman* is gratifying with its alternating expressions of beauty and ugliness. But the movement of the blank verse is sometimes prosy, and slow in getting under way. And Putnam is sometimes barren and sometimes helpless, awkward, cacophonous.

The expression is nevertheless successful. The diction itself evokes as well as symbolizes the world to which it is attuned, and has illustrative value. The quality of the language of *Words of an Old Woman*, rugose, acerb, sadistic, violent, swaggering and elemental, manages to communicate the substance of a brutalized, weary Nature; a Vital Force fundamentally generous and sweet, but become morbid and savage in the strait-jacket of a violent sublimation, half voluntary, half enforced; an inappropriate "civilization". Its whole emphasis is violent. It is like a cry or a blow, communicating pain, the misery of a tortured vitality, or hate returned for wrong.

Then, the language of other poems indicates solar heat, and the afflatus of the romantic personality's surge toward God. For a spiritual progress is incorporated in *The Five Seasons*: the great Sun at last reaches Bill, healing the wounds of birth. It draws the bewildered buck from "the darkness which was his Hell". It sends him its blood-responsive daughters, and wakes his powers; for when the daughters in their turn leave Bill, Bill finds that he has been burnt clean of his old dependence on the sex and identification of all value with its love and life. Value has passed from them into his own search and spirit. The sun has made him chaste and proportionate, and his wisecrack at Smollet Smith and Smith's feminine misadventures asserts masculine determination in its most primitive form. The discovery of a "fifth season" in the poems which lend their title to the volume announces the season of the spirit, "of hearts which take the fire hardily". On his ascending path, Bill meets the god of the world, Chance, recognized as the Mystic Absolute; and for the first time he finds himself in a Universe, beyond personal concerns, and one with the whole race in its adventure and its sympathy with the impenetrable beginning and end of its search. This reality has its appropriate language, too. That the quality of the language exhibiting the expansion of the sun, and Bill's growing will, freedom, and sympathy with the form-giver of life, is not as "set" and stripped as that communicating the spirit of Hell, is perhaps not to be denied. Neither *The Daughters of the Sun* nor *The Hymn to Chance* has the expressive force, the intensity and power of *Words of an Old Woman* or the pithiness of *Bill Gets Burned*.

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Putnam is perhaps still to be celebrated rather more for his poetization of the expression of a badly sublimated "energy", the language of toughs and soldiers and mechanics, or for his macabre and humorous and ironic conceptions, than for his essays in the grand style resplendent. None the less, *The Daughters* and the *Hymn* belong among those important expressions which, incomplete in themselves, have the virtue of nearing a larger completion than any hitherto attained by the poet. As it stands, *The Daughters* remains as magnificent an erotic poem as any written in America.

Thus Putnam's symbolic creation rises up before us "straight from the unapparent"; and its appearance is of moment not only to those who admire brainy poetry, a masculine impulse and lofty conceptions, or those who sympathize generally with the romantic vision of life's adventure, but to those concerned for the progress of American life itself. By its ethical after-effect, the bristling and significant microcosm of the poet wins one to sympathy with a particular spiritual attitude toward things. For it is the mature fruit of a generation which contained the seeds of a relationship to life more fertile than that of the preceding American ones. This generation was the romantic generation of the war. Part of the contra-Puritanic wave that almost recoloured America overnight, not quite two decades since, it possessed a new sensibility, a yearning for impossible splendours, a very healthy sense of "original virtue", zest for experience, feeling of the emotional possibilities of life, and an anti-mercantilism, sharp as its anti-Calvinism. Unfortunately, its keener nerves, senses and passions proved "a fatal gift". Like most of America, most of the members of this "younger generation" of the war years rather expected things to happen of themselves, and were incapable of progressing beyond the initial disillusionment with the bitter nature of the world. And as the romantic wave subsided, and the really victimized generation of the "old men of twenty-five" succeeded their particoloured one, and disappointments with things and their own weakness grew apace, nausea developed.

Always one of its gifted spokesmen—his early sonnets, and his verses *To the Memory of Yale College* and *The Ballad of a Strange Thing* were so many rallying cries to his routed generation—Putnam, like Cummings and several others of its men of letters, maintained himself and gathered a mature experience. Hence, his new work not only recapitulates the immemorial romantic conception and "shows the way" but "gives so sweet a prospect unto the way as will entice any man to enter into it". The varying moods of penitence for past aggression, the personal exaltation excited by these emotive forms of Putnam's align one with the poet. His picture of the power and anger of America and its sick and bleeding soil turns one toward the old idealism, that does not want to ravage the nature with which it sympathizes. His deflation of childish romanticism and instruments for evasion fortifies the impulse of personality, that has no affair with dissipation, but only with ever new experiences and inclusivity and ascension. The conception of America itself as the scene of some pilgrimage toward a mysterious spiritual perfection and wholeness of being, revives the deeply American yearning of the explorer, the scholar, the seeker—and the hobo. Certainly other racial impulses exist and have their reason. But without these romantic motives we should not have been a nation. Perhaps only through their persistence do we remain one.

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EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF PARIS

by Havelock Ellis

When I was a young schoolboy the Franco-Prussian war was fought. That event probably coloured my feelings towards France for fifty years. The London *Graphic* was then beginning to appear, with its illustrations more vividly realistic than any before, and here I was able to follow the fate of French arms. No doubt my sympathies were further coloured, apart from the attraction of a losing cause, by the fact that my schoolmaster, De Chastelain by name, was of French origin—the Anglicized son of a Frenchman, I believe—and the school itself bore the name of "The French and German College", though the German element was negligible.

It was not till a few years later, when I was about fourteen, that I became familiar enough with the French language to read it for my own pleasure. Searching among old books that had once belonged to my grandmother, a woman of culture, I came on the *Rêveries* of Rousseau, which was thus the first French book I read for its own sake. Its musical seduction came to me as the revelation of something new, though it was not till many years later that I understood the significance of Rousseau.

So far I had never been in France. I had been twice round the world and knew much about French literature before, in 1883, I reached Paris, accompanied by my friend Angus Mackay, an acute young critic and poet, who later gave his best energies to the Church and died in middle age before making any deep mark on the world. It was a brief visit and limited to those outstanding objects of interest with which one's knowledge of a great city must always begin. A second visit followed in 1889, the year of the Exposition to celebrate the centenary of the Revolution, and in 1890, when my medical course was completed and I felt that the next stage in education was to learn something about science and art in France, there followed a more prolonged and a more penetrating exploration of Paris. On this occasion I was accompanied by my friend Arthur Symons to whom Paris was still an unknown land of heart's desire; but he was furnished with useful letters of introduction which, directly and indirectly, opened for us doors of literature and art, for of science I am not here called upon to speak. We settled in the Hôtel Corneille—opposite the Odéon and agreeably close to the Luxembourg Gardens—which had been recommended to me by Professor Patrick Geddes, and we paid, if I remember rightly, forty-five francs a month each for our rooms. This hotel, since considerably renovated, is not only situated in a district historically interesting, but, as I gradually learned, had its own historical and literary associations, being familiarly known to Balzac and to Baudelaire among other notable persons.

We were not exploring at random. We had neither of us come to gaze at the idols of the crowd or to seek out the venerated figures who still survived to enjoy a fame won

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in the generation before, and for us faded. It is true, we called upon Coppée in his pleasantly countrified suburban house, and he came forward, arms outstretched, to greet us with all his feminine charm; but we were not interested in his work. True, also, we saw Meissonier with his little stocky body and his long gray beard, seated on varnishing-day in a corner of the New Salon over which he presided, but we passed by his pictures. Neither Anatole France nor Zola concerned us, and when we saw the genially gross Sarcey in the middle of the circle at the theatre, rotating his huge body and broad smile to beam on his friends to right and left, it was only as an object of amusement. We ostentatiously avoided alike the Opéra and the Folies Bergères as temples of convention, though some years later I was present at the Opéra with my wife for events that are still memorable to me; for Rameau and for Debussy, perhaps above all for Dukas's *Ariane et Barbe Bleue*. In music there was the Concert Rouge in the Rue de Tournon near by, where interesting things not yet to be heard in England could be enjoyed for the price of a *consommation*, and on special occasions there was the Sunday afternoon Concert Lamoureux. Here I once had the rare experience of hearing so popular an idol as Sarah Bernhardt hissed. The concert was preceded by a recital the famous actress had consented to give of a pretentious and high-strung religious mystery play lately written by Haraucourt. It was recited in monotonous and duly solemn tones for what seemed an interminable time while the audience grew restless, until at last the reciter's voice—which long before my time had ceased to deserve the epithet "golden"—was drowned by cries of *"La musique! La musique!"* Haraucourt rushed forward from his stall; actress and author fell into each other's arms and embraced; the first part of the program was concluded.

We represented the young generation and were concerned only with those figures who were leaders or prominent representatives of the young generation, however *démodé* and *vieux jeu* some of them may appear forty years later when they are all dead and a new generation has found new orientations. Such figures were Mallarmé, Rodin, Verlaine, Huysmans, Carrière, Henri de Régnier, Charles Morice, Odilon-Redon, Remy de Gourmont, and others, some more notable, of whom one or other of us caught but a glimpse—such as Taine and Edmond de Goncourt—and others whose names are even now almost or quite forgotten. We had looked forward to meeting Villiers de l'Isle Adam but he died just before our arrival. Renan was still alive, though much of an invalid, but he was already a familiar figure to me, for I had attended the course of Hibbert lectures he had delivered in London a few years earlier.

To return to my own personal attitude, I must go back a few years and refer to a work which, on its first publication in 1885 and the following year, I had most carefully read and eagerly absorbed—the two volumes of *Essais de Psychologie contemporaine*. Bourget, the author of that memorable book, has since become a pillar of the Church, the apostle of conservatism, and the acute critic of all the tendencies of our time. He has even (I am told) carefully toned down in a later edition the more daring utterances in the famous *Essais*. The earlier Bourget was a champion and leader of the youth of his time, though even by 1889 he seemed to me to have fallen behind, and in my first book, *The New Spirit*, published in that year, I put on the title-page a motto

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from the *Essais* but thought well to refrain from indicating its source. In the early eighties—I have seen nothing he wrote since—I read the stories in which with a new analytic refinement he presented problems in the psychology of love, and above all the *Essais*. Here he discussed, with fine critical insight and admirable literary felicity, among others, Baudelaire and Stendhal and Flaubert and the Goncourts and Turgenev, precisely the figures which were then emerging from the conflicts of their own time to become the classics of us of the new generation. It was Bourget, more than anyone, who swept away the last obscuring mists. Any critic thenceforth who disputed the significance of those figures was thereby marked as himself a negligible relic of the past.

Bourget, who dated the Preface of his *Essais* from Oxford, assumed no narrowly French outlook, but one that may be said to be equally congenial to that of my generation in England. He was not concerned, he declared, with literary criticism in the usual sense. For him the processes of art were simply *signs*. He was writing notes for the use of "the historian of the Moral Life in the second half of the nineteenth century", using the word "moral" in the French sense, meaning, as he said, that "the *book* is the great initiator"; for it presents the modes of feeling and of action which the young generation greedily absorbs, the modes which, when the first stage of their lives passes into the second and more adult stage, cannot but be influential in moulding their activities. And at the end of this volume Bourget seeks to reply to the question: has civilization merely complicated man's misery and refined his barbarism—finding, he says, "sometimes a reply of pain and sometimes of faith and hope". It is well to recall these *Essais* here for they admirably represented (distinguishing, I repeat, the former from the later Bourget) the mood in which at that period I faced literature and approached the land in which it seemed to me so acutely alive.

The literary France that I went forth to find was, as I viewed it, largely a continuation of that described by Bourget, the chief later influence being that commonly called Symbolism which then for a moment touched French poetry. This so-called Symbolist movement—it is an ill-defined name which is better dropped—might be said to be most penetratingly embodied in Verlaine who, at all events for me, stood alone among French poets of that time, with indeed few peers at any time in France. There was Rimbaud indeed (whom one then coupled with Corbière), Verlaine's comrade, but he had mysteriously disappeared when little more than a boy, and his work, striking as it was, seemed less important than it seems today when, with a technique that then appeared too daring, it stands out as a great inspiring force. To the English mind especially Verlaine was, as he remains today, peculiarly congenial, for he stood at the furthest extreme from that pseudo-classical French rhetoric that offends us. There was in and over his verse the broken haunting music, the iridescent mist of England—where indeed some of the best of it had been written—and his genuine sympathy with English poetry aided his native genius in making a deep and irresistible appeal.

The echoes of an earlier pseudo-classical and romantically rhetorical age were indeed still heard in France, and some of those who carried them on not only survived but even displayed a high degree of virtuosity with their instruments. Such a one was Catulle Mendès, a man who came into touch with the younger generation but had mixed with

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some of the most notable persons of his own, and himself attained a high degree of competence in literature. It was that sort of quality which lies in presenting a superb mask with nothing behind it, a quality supremely well illustrated by Gabriele d'Annunzio and for some of us without deep appeal. Catulle Mendès was at that period no longer the fair Apollo—a rare type among Jews—which he had been for those of his own generation; there was a fixed lassitude in his pallid face and heavy body; and with tepid interest I listened as he discoursed languidly one day of the famous people he had known.

Verlaine at that time seemed to dominate French imaginative literature as Rodin dominated French plastic art; each with an intimate and lyrical quality; each, curiously enough, with the same complete defect of architectonic constructive power; and both of them destined to be overshadowed for a time by men who followed them; yet both surely with all their limitations remaining in their own spheres unapproachable.

It was at an early stage that, together with Arthur Symons, and guided by Charles Morice, I sought out Verlaine. Morice had not long before published an admirably intelligent and appreciative little book about Verlaine, the first ever published and the first serious attempt to estimate the poet's quality. We had shared the expense of inviting him to dinner at our favourite restaurant, the Boulant in the Boul' Miche, where we frequented a corner presided over by Céline, a waitress of gracious dignity and a personality in herself, who remained at that post for many years, where I would greet her as an old friend when passing through Paris, until at last she was no longer there and I heard from a fellow waitress that she had retired. After dinner, which Morice devoured with a fine appetite (to be the banner-bearer of the new generation does not enable one to put much butter on one's bread), he led us down the Boulevard to the Café François Premier, at the corner near the quays where, at that time, Verlaine was usually to be found in the evening with the traditional glass of absinthe. Near him were seated several men of his group, notably Moréas. For me there was nothing attractive about Moréas either as personality or poet (but his best work was done later), and his loud metallic Greek voice and accent, his dark sinister features and staccato movements were antipathetic. Not so Verlaine. The descriptions one sometimes finds of Verlaine are so unpleasant that I suspect, and sometimes am sure, that the writers never met him. He was certainly an ambiguous figure for respectable society, to which he had no entry; but at that period at all events, and as I met him, there could be no more pleasant companion—simple, unaffected, genial, courteous. Symons, in his *Mes Souvenirs* written long after, has described this occasion in his own manner, but his account here of Verlaine's appearance and behaviour is as accurate as it is vivid, and I can endorse it at every point.

He invited us to come on a subsequent evening to the room he then occupied at the Hôtel des Mines, some distance up the Boulevard opposite the Ecole des Mines. This hotel was, and remained many years later, a dingy and primitive place with many small gloomy rooms, for Paris hotels until recent times were sometimes among the most unpleasantly antiquated I have known anywhere. (In the South they are often antique but with lofty if ragged nobility.) Here we duly appeared and inquired at the concierge's bureau for M. Verlaine; I must admit that the young woman when she told us he had not yet returned looked sour at the mention of the

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name. We strolled along the Boulevard and soon saw the poet jovially approaching us, as with lame leg and stick he noisily clumped along the pavement, accompanied by an insignificant little man who seemed an attached friend. We returned to the hotel and Verlaine led us to his room where we were soon joined by a tall pale youth. As ever Verlaine played the part of genial host in his bare and sordid abode. He drew forth a purse, produced from it a two-franc piece—all it contained, I fear—saying in English in honour of his guests: "I have—*money*; I—will have—*pleasure*!" The little man was sent out, again in compliment to supposed English tastes, for a small bottle of rum and glasses, and on his return I handed round my cigarette case. At first, I think, the conversation was of Verlaine's experiences some twenty years earlier in England, and then we talked of poetry; Verlaine dismissed rather summarily most of the French classics, but when Racine's name was mentioned his tone suddenly changed to deep appreciation. There was no call for more drink. It is a subject with which Verlaine's name is often associated; but though he usually had a glass in front of him he seemed as abstemious over it as most Frenchmen; in my early days in Paris I constantly wondered at the ability of the Frenchman to spend an hour over a *bock* which an Englishman would swallow at a draught.

The thought of Verlaine leads to Mallarmé, for unlike as were the two men in character and art and environment they were contemporaries, associated in the same movement of symbolism and were furnished with rather similar memories of England, though it is in Verlaine's work that these may be more easily detected. I no longer recall how contact with Mallarmé was secured, but I well remember climbing up with Symons to the little apartment in the Rue de Rome, the neatly kept home of a family man of fine taste who had to exercise a rigid economy. It was Tuesday evening, his reception day, and he opened the door to us, a small quiet man with a pleasant smile, a figure at once arousing a sympathetic response. These famous Tuesday evening gatherings—at that period the social focus of French poetic art—corresponded to nothing in London. But England had known such centers in earlier centuries when the young pioneers of great movements, literary or social, gathered round a Master who preached to them a new gospel. Ben Jonson at the tavern, Samuel Johnson at the tea-party, Samuel Parr at the dinner-table, were all the dominating figures of groups, literary, conservative, or radical, to mould the coming generations. But these groups were formed, as it were, on the monarchic constitutional pattern under which they arose; the King thundered insolently among subjects who meekly bowed their heads; Mallarmé belonged to a democratic dispensation; we listened devoutly to his words, but there was no assumption of superiority; his gentle voice was never raised; one could not ever imagine him thundering.

The scene of these gatherings was the small dining-room almost filled by the oblong table at which we sat, with Mallarmé at the head, his back to the door, Henri de Régnier at one hand, and, if I remember rightly, Gabriel Mourey the translator of Swinburne at the other, while at the lower end of the table, on opposite sides, were Symons and I. The bowl of tobacco, the only form which Mallarmé's hospitality could take, was passed up and down so that we made cigarettes at need. We did not meet Madame Mallarmé and the children, but (as I learned later from Mrs. Moulton,

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the poet, who knew the Mallarmés) they were in the next room, quiet as mice, able to hear our voices, and even to make mischievous comments. On this occasion the tone of the gathering was perhaps unusually subdued. A few days earlier a young poet of promise, Ephraïm Mikhäel (but his real name was Georges Michel) had died in Paris under rather pathetic circumstances, and all I can recall of the conversation was that, apart from some discussion of English poets, especially Swinburne, it was mainly concerned with Mikhäel whose death on the fifth of May serves to date this meeting.

A man of letters of the first rank of that time in Paris, though not the leader of a movement nor the soul of a *cénacle*, impressed me more deeply than the amiable Mallarmé. That was Huysmans. Introduced by Gourmont who was then in close touch with him, though later they had a misunderstanding, I met Huysmans (of whom later I wrote at some length in my book *Affirmations*) on various occasions. I visited him at his government office; I accompanied him to a café to take a vermouth for his digestion; above all I have spent an evening with him in the apartment of his friend and Gourmont's, the lady, in earlier years the favourite model of a famous sculptor, who was the original of Madame Chantelouve in *Là-Bas*, which had just then been published. It was a tiny room and the walls at every possible and impossible spot were covered by knick-knacks and bric-à-brac. Here Huysmans sat and quietly talked in response to remarks that were made, not often initiating conversation nor yet addressing any particular person, recalling little incidents in his experience which illustrated the pathetic imbecility of mankind, and uttering opinions which could sometimes be very damning. But he always spoke gently, and however atrocious he might find the world it always seemed to him—as to Edward Carpenter who would judge it rather similarly—still worth a smile.

When I look back, Huysmans remains for me, of all the men I have ever known, perhaps the most pure and unalloyed embodiment of genius. I am thinking of his personality, not of his work, though that seems to me of great and permanent value. If the man of genius is the supremely well-tempered man who yet has working in his constitution a strange ferment which produces on the physical side a certain fragility and on the spiritual side a new creative energy; and if—as I would also say—he is one who, with a temperament which thus freshly blends morbidity and health in hitherto unknown proportions, is set at an angle to the world and mankind at which no man was ever set before, so that he sees everything anew, then I think that genius is well illustrated by Huysmans. In appearance he was slender and rather tall, with an air of refined distinction, almost of asceticism, not of the rigid and repressed moral sort, but suggesting an intellectual and temperamental source. In relation to health he tended to be dyspeptic, but though not robust there was nothing weakly about him. His finely strung nature was held in natural control; he was a man of the North to whom southern excitability was not congenial, and there is no doubt that he was a model government official. Yet his duties may well have furnished a wholesome balance to an organism which seemed a psycho-physical unity exquisitely poised for the finest responses of sensation and intellect and at the same time (as his friend Dr. Maurice de Fleury has left on record) contained a definite psychopathic and paranoiac element.

It must not, at the same time, be supposed that such an organic adaptation involved an

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inhuman attitude to life. Beneath it, however slightly obvious on the surface, there was a tender humanity, and when his friends were suffering or dying it was Huysmans who was at the bedside to succour. His own passage through life he has described in a series of books of unequal value. At the time of which I speak he was about to enter what was perhaps the most memorable and fascinating stage of it—that recorded in *En Route*.

The name of Remy de Gourmont has entered here more than once, as indeed may be natural, for of all the men I came in touch with during these months in Paris, it was with Gourmont alone that the relation continued, remaining unimpaired even to his death twenty-five years later. He was not one of those whom I had come to Paris to see, and his early work indeed, however brilliant, with its rather feverishly cerebral imaginative qualities, was not of a kind to appeal to me. But he was remarkably friendly and helpful from the outset. Already much of a recluse, at that time living in the Rue du Bac, in a little study lined high with books, he would call in at the hotel to furnish us with news or information, and sometimes to accompany us on some little excursion, once to the famous Gingerbread Fair at Vincennes. A rather small grave reserved man, with the traits of his Norman race, not an active talker, there was no doubt a certain irritable susceptibility beneath; I recall when one evening we were together on the Parvis Notre-Dame, and a woman approached and lightly touched his arm, the subdued indignation of the reproof with which he turned to her: "On ne touche pas!" The posthumously published *Letters to the Amazon* were for many the revelation of an unknown side to his character. For the most part his life was lived in the world of books and he would move in that world with intellectual muscles that were singularly supple and vigorous, as may be admitted by one who prefers to regard books not as the world of life but as the steps to be trodden on the approach to life. Gourmont began his career with a position in the Bibliothèque Nationale; nothing could better have suited one who was so essentially a man of books. It was about the time I began to know him that an article he had published, an innocent little outburst about "patriotism as a toy", which seemed opposed to the solemn anti-German traditions of France, caused his dismissal, and he set himself seriously and methodically to the life of letters outside a library, largely in association on the publishing side with M. Alfred Vallette, the director of the activities of the *Mercure de France*, whom I recall as a solid, cautious, and capable business man and found just the same, except for whitened hair, and still at the same post, when I had occasion to visit him in his office in the Rue de Condé thirty-five years later. Gourmont's intellectual grip continued to grow stronger, ever closer to the world of life, and his style more brilliant during the years that followed, so that by the beginning of the century he seemed to be the finest contemporary French critic and was already gaining an audience wherever the influence of France penetrates. Varied as his work was, it seems as a critic that he was at his best, and that on the series of *Promenades littéraires* and allied volumes his reputation may most surely rest.

In the period of which I am speaking, however, good criticism was lacking in France. There was indeed Gourmont's own youthful work, the two volumes of the *Livre des Masques*, remarkable for insight and judgment concerning writers still largely at

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the stage of promise. The age was creative rather than critical. Even the most notable critics of the immediately preceding period had themselves been creative. That was true not only of Bourget in his *Essais* but still more of a more powerful spirit, Taine. His history of English literature was a creative evocation such as had not before been witnessed; it was comparable in this respect to Michelet's history of France. The fascination of elemental passion for the cool and deliberate scholar put Taine alike apart from the unprejudiced analyst in Sainte-Beuve's manner and the rigid Academician in Brunetière's, making him the ideal historian of the natural and primitive art of England, and when he turned to French literature in his admirable *Essais de Critique et l'Histoire* it was in the same spirit.

"The critic", Taine declared, "is the naturalist of the soul. He accepts its various forms; he condemns none and describes all." It is a difficult function to perform, and Taine himself sometimes failed to live up to it. But in the immediately succeeding period the academic professional critics, of whom Brunetière was the outstanding type and representative, were having it their own way, fitting all literature into pigeon-holes, and dismissing altogether or ignoring those literary manifestations which could not be cut down and trimmed to fit frames made in the seventeenth century. With such critics, however useful for pedagogical purposes, I was not concerned.

Among the critics outside these academic ranks, however, it was not easy to find any of significance or insight. There was Lemaître, and to him I could attach no value; it is hard to tell how he could have exerted any influence. Enough to have seen and heard him. I went to the Odéon when he gave there an address on Ibsen. What he said I do not recall, though well I recall the famous performance of *Ghosts* by Antoine at his own theatre (he was not yet at the Odéon) before it reached England.

A more representative critic of 1890, though certainly far from a great critic, was Charles Morice, with his *Littérature de tout à l'Heure*. He had not the solid intellect or the wide culture needed for permanently fine achievement in any direction, and died at length without having made any deep mark. But for his own time he performed a real service. With a mind perhaps too extravagantly sensitive to be well balanced, he was eagerly receptive to new movements, he could recognize the personalities incarnating new moods of creative art which had not yet penetrated the callous epiderm of conventional opinion; and he knew how to write of what he had so vividly seen. He was a Provençal and had all that emotional excitability of mind we associate with the South, although, as a matter of fact, it is thence that so many grave and deep philosophers have emerged. I think of him as I once saw him on varnishing-day at the New Salon, with the tall awkward lanky form, the vulturine head, the flapping arms, rushing through the rooms, looking swiftly to right and to left, as though he would seize what the new men were producing in a single swoop.

I have passed over many memorable experiences of that long and fruitful summer in Paris, but they would not modify the total picture. Such was the Paris of 1890. So at all events it appeared to a youthful and ardent spiritual adventurer who was privileged to come into contact with many of its chief representatives, some of them now reckoned among the immortals.

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THE LAST LITERARY TEA?

Anonymous

LITERARY teas are dating rapidly. They were one of the numerous tableau flourishes of the late Coolidge era, gestures of careless prosperity. Social historians like Mr. Beer will recall them with irony and sentiment as soon as the period loses its smell and takes on the fainter and more agreeable odour of antiquity. In theory they had a use: they were, like the engravings on bogus stocks, intended to valuate bogus reputations; in effect, they almost consciously illustrated Veblen's categories of conspicuous waste.

The present season has seen three or four teas at most. For a number of reasons the one to be described in the following paragraphs may be considered the most significant, as it may well be the most memorable. In the first place—an indication of the chastened attitude of publishers—it was given by the author himself, his prudent publisher being merely one of the guests. Secondly, it was primarily a society function, and in that way returned to the source from which it sprung.

It was given in the world's biggest hotel a few days after its pretentious opening. The invitations were aristocratically simple, having been composed, it is said, by Oscar himself. If so, they indicated that precision was correctly included among his often catalogued virtues. In a corner, the exact street entrance and the exact bank of elevators to be used were named; a useful politeness, for the new Waldorf requires a Baedeker.

Unlike the almost blatant informality of most literary teas, this was surrounded with formalities. The introductions were a triple play—doorman to host to hostess. As you were discharged from the elevator, a tuxedoed attendant touched you on the arm, asked your name, announced it in an explosive voice, and with discreet, guiding pressures, steered you to the waiting host who uttered a mechanically gracious greeting. If your name and appearance were not positively in your disfavour, or if you did not hurry too eagerly out of his hands, the host introduced you to a tyrannically affable woman who assisted as hostess and who led you around to be how-de-doed by the Big Shots, the social-registerites.

It happened that many of the Big Shots were there, including some countesses and a Mrs. H———, whose presence is sufficient in itself to make a social event. The party in fact was reported as such in the society columns, with the names of the literary guests carefully expurgated. In the more detailed reports gowns were minutely described, and "dear Mrs. H——— looked adorable". The book was scarcely mentioned; since society had come to make history, the book had at once become prehistoric.

The host, a tall gentleman whose leanness lengthened him still more, had the appearance of an English hunting squire. His face was high-boned and ruddy, his voice matter-of-fact but without decisiveness. He was untiringly genial. Being himself a social-

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registerite, and having been, it was rumoured, a society editor, he was a veteran in these campaigns, and the glaze of cordiality on his face set punctually with the first bow. The function, if it imposed no burden upon him, also seemed to give him no pleasure. His satisfaction was to come later when the party was over and he made up his list of guests; and again the following day when he read it in the morning papers.

The suite in which the tea was given is called the Pillement Suite, one of the French condiments in the goulash that constitutes the hotel's interior architecture. The hallways leading from it are modern in black and aluminum. There were three rooms and a lobby. Strung across the mirror on one of the lobby walls was an enlarged transcript of a telegram from Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr. The message was to this effect: "Sorry I can't be with you. Best wishes for your book. With a title like that the book can't help go over". The title is one of the favourite nouns of spicy literature.

There was an early and tacit division of the guests into two groups, effected by a parallel snobbism, blue blood on one side, the decorated-by-literature on the other. Society, having more leisure and being there before the job-bound *littérateurs,* had established itself in the most commodious of the three rooms. The middle room was neutral. The third room contained the refreshment table, supporting coffee urns, samovars heated by stylistically primitive alcohol burners, and sandwich platters. On a smaller table nearby were the drinks. In this room the literati, who, with two or three exceptions, were decidedly second-string, congregated.

In the middle room the atmosphere was spiritless. It seemed to hold in suspension the vague hostility between the two groups. At an upright piano in one corner a bored and ignored professional entertainer pumped out various over-familiar tunes. Most of the time he lingered at the refreshment table stolidly eating sandwiches, or stood at a window blankly staring out.

What society thought of the literati was implicit in its indifference. It was said that this tone had been induced by the *faux pas* of one of the early arrivals in the literary camp who had insisted upon handshakes with his introductions. What the literati felt about society was made explicit enough. One by one they hovered about the door of the large room and came back with smiles. A newspaper columnist buttonholed acquaintances and said with suppressed glee, "Boy, they're straight out of Peter Arno". He was right. They furnished living proof that Peter Arno is a social realist of unerring accuracy. There even occurred an animated Peter Arno anecdotal cartoon, complete in character, incident, and caption. Out of the society room a tall young woman with an awestruck face, unsteady with the gravity of her mission, tottered in, repeating, "Mrs. Wiffenpoof wants a snifter! Mrs. Wiffenpoof wants a snifter!" The snifter was delivered to her and she tottered out with it. It was apparent that the fetching of the snifter was an arrival-point in her social career.

Among the literati conversation was restless and shifting. The subjects were books, personal gossip, and the Depression. There may have been a special piquancy in discussing the last while munching the exquisite titbits of the Waldorf caterers. The strenuously cheerful publisher's publicity man went from huddle to huddle making introductions and smiling dutifully at the wisecracks.

In the society room conversation was mere ritual. Around each of the very eminent there was a group which seemed to be happy to act

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as antiphonal chorus. An eminence might (and did) say, "How *very* warm it is today", along with most of the other nullities of social converse, and there was a rush with the reverent response, "Yes, it *is* very warm today". Whatever other conversation there was among the free-lances and the few detachables, and the hostess working to produce unity, went on in muted tones.

The principal ingredient of literary teas —liquor—was not abundant. Had Mrs. Wiffenpoof waited ten minutes longer for her snifter, not even the delicate frenzy of her protegée would have obtained it for her. In that respect the party was a proof that the society dictum against liquor at afternoon parties has been spoken and is in effect. The liquor, it was said, was not provided by the author, who thus kept the rules, but by a persistent friend intent on keeping the literati in good humour. The supply looked generous when the party began; but the day was unseasonably warm, and the drinks too near at hand; and society deigned to partake. Thirsty editors were still arriving when the stock went dry. A telephone call produced another bottle which was quickly up-ended. And soon after the literati began to leave and the party began gently to disintegrate.

The break-up of the gathering had its special character. The literati went off without ceremony saying farewells at random. In the society room the host stood at a table holding his list in his hand. The more regal and impatient made their departures with the customary grace notes. The others formed in front of him. One by one the ladies and the few gentlemen paid their compliments and presented their cards, while he put checks against their names on his invitation list. As the checks grew, comments became rapturous. "A remarkable list!"; and for the first time the host's smile became genuine. Several of the guests specified spellings and additions. One lady requested to be put down as president of a club.

There was a last bit of comedy. Four copies of the host's book had been put on show on tables and window ledges. One copy had been autographed by an uninvited male guest and presented to a very marginal looking society woman, probably also uninvited. Two other copies had disappeared. The host saw the last copy being taken away and at that point his composure cracked and a human note of irritation came into his voice:

"But, my dear countess, you don't take books away like that!"

"Oh, very well," said the countess. "I thought it was a favour." And with a negligent gesture the countess gave up the book.

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"MICHAEL FIELD" AND ROBERT BROWNING

PART ONE—LETTERS

Edited by T. Sturge Moore

NOTE: *Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, the two ladies who wrote under the pseudonym of "Michael Field", having appointed me their literary executor, left me instructions to open their journal* "Works and Days", *at the end of 1929, and to publish as much and whatever parts of it I might think fit, supplementing them from bundles of letters written to or by the authors.*

To prepare readers for a plunge back into the eighteen-eighties, I would remind them that the characteristics of that age are not yet so quaint and dear as those of Boswell or of Pepys. We must expect to laugh, but our laughter will not quite so easily blend with love and respect, and yet I fancy that in the end few readers of these diaries can fail to become both friends and admirers of the authors, who have a most engaging vitality and are without any notion of the reflections that will now seem most obvious. With all their conventionality, they are simplicity itself, as open as children, while their own characters and minds and those to whom they introduce us are of a force and dignity to have created respect in any age. We must also remember that Katherine Bradley was thirty-nine and Edith Cooper twenty-three when the first letters begin, a few years before the diary, Robert Browning being then in his seventy-seventh year. He had wooed and saved Mrs. Browning some forty years earlier and still idolized her works, though she had been dead more than twenty years before he came on these young poetesses. To him in many unhoped for ways they must have been the past returning. His own work was again studied and pored over by a most distinguished poetess. He was reading verse which he admired, and behind which he discovered exceptional gifts of refinement and goodness. Indeed Katherine Bradley was the same age as Miss Barrett had been when he had first met her. At first Browning alone knew that they were the authors of Michael Field's "Callirrhöe", et cetera. The guests they met at his table were unaware that these ladies were "the new poet".

As the work of copying and editing is more than I could undertake unaided, I have associated myself with my son, D. Sturge Moore, who has prepared and correlated the passages for my approval.—T. STURGE MOORE.

* * *

(Robert Browning to Miss Cooper.)

Warwick Crescent, July 7, 1883.

DEAR MISS COOPER,

You have been very good and patient with my poetry and I thank you heartily. I thank you also for your kindness in sending the review itself. I ought to mention the Hebrew title is an imaginary one, the words meaning only "a collection of many fictions". [See Note to Jochanan Hakkadosh, *Jocoseria.*] I profit no less by your ingenuity. The second translation is cor-

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rect, "From Moses to Moses, et cetera". Pray believe me, dear Miss Cooper,

Yours with much regard,

ROBERT BROWNING.

(Edith Cooper to Robert Browning.)

Stoke Green, May 7, 1884.

Dear Mr. Browning,

The same Edith Cooper who ventured to send you a review of *Jocoseria* last year, is daring again. Repetition is born of encouragement. The kind letter with which you accepted the review is answerable for the intrepidity of this second attack on your kindness. This time I send you a book—partly mine—plays—the first fruits of thought spent by a new labourer in the vineyard of human life. If you will taste the fruit, it will not have been grown in vain.

Yours with deep respect,

EDITH COOPER.

(Robert Browning to Edith Cooper.)

Warwick Crescent, May 28, 1884.

Dear Miss Cooper,

I should be glad to know, since it is *you* whom I address and must thank—how much of the book that is "partly yours", is indeed your own part; it is long since I have been so thoroughly impressed by indubitable poetic *genius*; a word I consider while I write, only to repeat it, "genius". The second play is brimfull of beauty; in thought and in feeling, admirably expressed; I think I see often enough the proof of youth and perhaps haste; but the great promise is not promise only; there is performance in an extraordinary degree. So with the first play; it recalls, to its disadvantage in certain respects, the wonderful *Bacchæ* of Euripides; and the deaths are dealt thickly about, in hardly an artistic fashion; but the scene between Machaon and the Faun [*Callirrhöe*] would compensate for almost any amount of crudeness and incompleteness, which probably will not be so observable when I read both poems again, as I mean to do. Meanwhile accept my true congratulations and believe me

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT BROWNING.

(Edith Cooper to Robert Browning.)

Stoke Green.

(No date. Postmark May 29, 1884.)

Dear Mr. Browning,

Such words as yours give more abundant life: to expend it in higher, more reverent effort is the only true gratitude possible. As to myself and my part in the book—to make all clear to you, I must ask for strict secrecy. My aunt and I work together after the fashion of Beaumont and Fletcher. She is my senior by but fifteen years. She has lived with me, taught me, encouraged me and joined me to her poetic life. She was the enthusiastic student of the *Bacchæ*. Some of the scenes of our play are like mosaic work—the mingled, various product of our two brains. The Faun scene is mine. I was just nineteen when with joy, mixed with a dreary sense of woe, the conception came to me. *Emathian* is also almost wholly mine and much of *Margery*. I think if our contributions were disentangled and one subtracted from the other, the amount would be almost even. This happy union of two in work and aspiration is sheltered and expressed by "Michael Field". Please regard him as the author.

If we are united in our poetic work, so are we also in our true admiration and earnest study of your works. The book was really sent by both, though a kind letter from you last year to me, gave me, it was judged, the privilege of writing to you.

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Still hoping, doubting that I can make you feel what your letter has been to me, I remain, dear Mr. Browning,

Yours with deep respect,

EDITH COOPER.

(Robert Browning to Michael Field.)

Warwick Crescent, May 31, 1884.

Dear Michael Field,

I shall indeed have help in being suffered to so address you; I receive this moment, from a person I met at dinner last night, the critique in the *Spectator*, of which I heard for the first time in your letter. It is sent because of my saying, with a notion that I was the actual discoverer, "There is a new poet". My acquaintance replied, "You mean Michael Field"—and here comes the very style and title anticipatively accorded—most justly. I should like to add a word or two to what I hastily wrote on the supposition that I was the discoverer. I read both poems again, only to confirm my opinion of the extraordinary clearness of the evidence that genius runs through it all, like your "starry serpent of torchlight"; now fully emerging, now sufficiently divined. I did not, at the first hasty reading of the first part of *Callirrhöe*, do justice to the originality of the poem; what seemed fine and true at first sight, approved itself even more unmistakably so, when twice laid to head and heart. I am far from wanting to add a sort of poor grace to this recognition of mine, by assuring you what is not hard to believe, that it is unfortunately seldom indeed, that with the best will in the world, I am able to say anything beyond a natural thanks for the books of verse, which imply a compliment if not a kindness by their visitations: I was not prepared for veritable poetry in your case. And as for the sense of gratitude one is bound to have, when made aware that there is liking for works of one's own in the same way; it stands actually as hindrance to what may resemble a payment in kind. But I count on your understanding this and more. The critique is capital in the main; and timely above all things. Don't be frowned out of that scene [the Faun scene], which is quite your own, and decisively original, and consonant with a deeper "naturalness" than friend Hutton ever had experience of; in the main however he sees the points and speaks to them. Now go and prosper! I wanted to say that you may depend on your secret—as to the divided authorship, and the rest—being kept by me, who am very unnecessarily apprised that the difference in age between such relatives needs not be considerable. I think the most beautiful woman I ever saw was two years older than myself, and for all that my very aunt—my grandfather having married a second time in middle life.

Yours most truly and with renewed congratulations,

ROBERT BROWNING.

(Katherine Bradley to Robert Browning.)

Stoke Green.

Sunday Even, 23 Nov. 1884.

Spinoza with his fine grasp of unity says: "If two individuals of exactly the same nature are joined together, they make up a single individual, doubly stronger than each alone" —i.e., Edith and I make a *veritable Michael*. And we humbly fear you are destroying this philosophic truth: it is said the *Athenæum* was taught by you to use the feminine pronoun. Again someone named André Raffalovich, whose earnest young praise gave me genuine pleasure, now writes in ruffled distress, he, "thought he was writing to a boy —a young man. . . . he has learnt on the best authority it is not so". I am writing to

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him to assure him that the best authority is my work. But I write to you to beg you to set the critics on a wrong track. We each know that you mean good to us; and are persuaded you thought that by "our secret" we meant the dual authorship. The revelation of that would indeed be utter ruin to us; but the report of lady authorship will dwarf and enfeeble our work at every turn. Like the poet Gray (M. Arnold) we shall never "speak out". And we have many things to say that the world will not tolerate from a woman's lips. We must be free as dramatists to work out in the open air of nature—exposed to her vicissitudes, witnessing her terrors; we cannot be stifled in drawing-room conventionalities. In Clifton we have made a desperate fight for the freedom of our privacy; and yesterday, to my joy, Edith was asked by a friend to read a sonnet in the *Spectator,* I wrote a fortnight ago, on Fawcett, "by Michael Field—a Bristol man"! That is victory here . . . meanwhile in London? Oh, with a word you can persuade the critics you have been tricking them; the heart of the mystery is not plucked out! Besides you are robbing us of real criticism, such as man gives man. The gods learn little from the stupid words addressed to them at their shrines: they disguise; meet mortals unsuspecting in the market-place and enjoy wholesome intercourse. We want to listen like that old poet of yours, who sat quite still and knew all that happened. . . . As women we trust to lead a quiet life, deepening as the years roll on. That deep nook in Michael's nature where the Faun plays—you, our Father Poet, will help to keep free from tourists' prying feet?

In respectful entreaty, I am faithfully yours,

KATHERINE BRADLEY.

(Browning's reply to this letter is missing. It was probably destroyed at the time.)

(Katherine Bradley to Robert Browning.)

Stoke Green, Nov. 27 1884.

Dear Mr. Browning,

I seem to remember that I wrote to you in my own name as a woman. I trust you overlooked that in your reply. I do not care to speak to you again of our relations to our work; on one point however, your misapprehension is so serious, that I cannot keep silent. I did not speak of combating "social conventions". It is not in our power or desire to treat irreverently customs or beliefs that have been, or are, sacred to men. We hold ourselves bound, in life and in literature, to reveal—as far as may be—the beauty of the high feminine standard of *the ought-to-be.* What I wrote was, "we cannot be stifled in drawing-room conventionalities". By that I meant we could not be scared away, as ladies, from the tragic elements of life. I am sorry I should have to explain this to you.

Faithfully yours,

KATHERINE H. BRADLEY.

(Edith Cooper to Robert Browning.)

Stoke Green, June 7, 1885 (p.m.).

Dear Mr. Browning,

The words that you wrote to me when I sent you *Callirrhöe,* made the chief joy I had in the little white book of last year. Its somewhat larger successor I venture to send you, as a witness of my true gratitude, and I hope you will read it without thinking of the authors' pseudonym, only of the pleasure and encouragement you gave them, by your right generous praise and recognition.

Sincerely yours,

EDITH COOPER.

I find the book cannot reach you till Tuesday. *The Father's Tragedy* is all my own, with the exception of Emmelino's song.

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(Robert Browning to Edith Cooper.)

Warwick Crescent, June 8, 1885.

My dear Miss Cooper,

The "little white book" caused the day on which I first became acquainted with it to become "a great red letter day"; and every after-reading has procured me one delight the more —there is the truth. How glad I was to hear that a second book was about to appear, you ought not to doubt—nor do you, I will believe. What I said on an impulse concerning *Callirrhöe* was less, I am sure, than I should have managed to say had I waited a little; but I wanted to speak first—and was anticipated all the same, as I found in a day or two. The post brings also a most welcome invitation from my dear friend Miss Swanwick, to meet you, ("you" being in the dual number) next Saturday. You shall then lay an injunction upon me as to what I shall say and not say, if the matter of authorship is mooted; and pray be assured that I shall act just as loyally as lovingly—to the best of my powers, at least. All success attend you—beginning with a conviction that you have done your fine powers justice!

ROBERT BROWNING.

(Edith Cooper to Robert Browning.)

Christchurch Vicarage, Blackheath, June 15, 1885 (p.m.).

Dear Mr. Browning,

We ask leave to tell you—for we could not speak at all on Saturday—of the happiness it gave us to be with you. Your belief in us will go on, literally all our days through, goading us and yet keeping us patient in our labour. We shall always "remember and understand". If you should find any tricks of style, any individual mannerisms, that break the unity of our work, will you be a critic as stern as you have been disinterested? We love our work too earnestly to be hurt by any educating severity. This you will know. Hoping that we may some day meet again,

Very sincerely yours,

EDITH COOPER.

(Edith Cooper to her Cousin Fanny.)

June, 1885.

. . . Well it is over and gone. We went in the morning to the Grosvenor [Gallery], where we saw the portrait of the old dear. . . . As soon as I entered the drawing room [Miss Swanwick's]—alas, among many faces—I at once recognized the old poet. True, he does not look the poet, there is no magnetic charm and little change of expression. He is rather stout, with a blank brow, strange flat-looking eyes that flash nothing out when he is showing his "worldly soul side"; and that are quietly deepened when the other soul side is turned towards you. A smile in which serenity and geniality meet in steady balance; no ancient and hoary splendour of beard and hair, both rather London-dust-coloured. A man whose emotional nature is commanded and reproved by a vast desire for knowledge, marked seriousness and worldly wisdom. Yet it was a moment in our lives, when he stood fondling our hands, with a touch that conveyed what he could not speak, then said, "How nice it is to have you standing, one on each side of me". He next explained how impartial a critic he was; how early he judged our work as literature. Then he spoke of his son, and how, like the dear father, he discovered his art gift in Millais's studio.

Then came lunch; old Canon Bell; Benson, a rising young actor with strange, mobile features; Mrs. Bruce and daughter, et cetera; besides the inspired-looking hostess, who sat with old, prophetic eyes, just under the

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Cumæan Sibyl. This lunch was very dull. Afterwards our Father Poet at once joined us and talked of Chatterton (for whom he has a strange admiration) and Shelley. When we parted he took our hands with firm, secret pressure, gently fondling them as he wished us all success and regretted he could not meet us again. I believe he would have kissed us had it not been for the public, who must have been astonished as it was. Of course we dared not talk much betraying talk. The book [*The Father's Tragedy*] was on the table. Ah! He was gracious and fatherly. As we parted he said he wished he had met us under happier circumstances, and left us the benediction of his belief (in us). Indeed we love him devotedly. . . .

(Edith Cooper to her mother.)

(Since the two accounts—one by Edith Cooper, the other by Katherine Bradley—of the visit to Warwick Crescent overlap considerably, the best passages of each have been welded together.)

May 18, 1886.

We arrived at Warwick Crescent, just before one o'clock. It looks on a canal. We rang. The door was opened by a man, not a slave in livery. . . . I caught sight of a white head and standing figure through the door. In another moment our hands were clasped with tender fervour by the old poet. He dragged us almost vehemently forward to an ugly, but most kind-looking lady, in brown, with white cap, bunched with pinky and claret-coloured ribbons. Her reception of us was most warm, never loosing my hand [Edith], she took me to a seat and we talked of many things. Close to me, under a heap of books was *The Father's Tragedy*, black with use. We descended to lunch. "Tell Mr. Robert to come." And then we were astonished by the entrance of a veritable curly ball, most grotesquely ugly. A jocund youth of thirty, who seems to find life delightful and tragic writers and suicides especial food for mirth . . . dear little woolly bear "Pen", as his father calls him, joining in full of amusement and mockery and seeming to realize that we thoroughly belonged. Enjoying too, Edith said, our artistic gold and green dresses. Then the old poet began a tale: "Listen, you tragic dramatists." An old Venetian gentleman had three daughters and one son. One day the girls got on board a steamer for the Lido, it was evening and the steamer was the last. The captain warned them to return to the boat in time; but they never came. He waited, but at last went his way. The girls were found drowned; purposely, for most careful directions were found as to the disposal and use of their things. The sentry at the Lido said that he saw them, but thought they were spirits. One of the girls when kissing her father, before starting, noticed he wanted a button to his coat and quietly replaced it. It seems there was a governess in the house, to whom the brother began to pay addresses, and who gave herself mighty airs. The brother had spoken unkindly to the sisters and told them three times they must leave the house, if they took such a bitter view of the case. After he had spoken for the third time, they prepared for death. We felt we were sitting at table with the author of *The Ring and the Book*, as we listened to his delightful unravelling of motives and sentiments in this sad story of an event which had taken place while he was at Venice. A new poem was evolved before us, that only wanted writing. In the middle of the meal he suddenly exclaimed: "We do not often have dramatists to see us. I feel with Dr. Johnson, who so revered tragedians, that when letting them out, he always announced that there was *one step*". During lunch, letters came and were received with

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the same eagerness as at Stoke. One was from Archdeacon Dennison, asking Mr. Browning to meet O. W. Holmes (the 9th invitation). He said, "Should you like to meet Mr. Holmes? He must be an interesting man". Our old poet, giving Sim [Pet name for Katherine Bradley, from Simætha; see *Long Ago.*] a hearty pat on the shoulder, said, "There are more interesting persons than Wendell Holmes. I am for the tragic writers". We went upstairs again and saw a curious inkstand—a Falstaffian swordsman—which Beddoes gave to Barry Cornwall. Then the old gentleman took us into a little room where stood pictures by his son. . . . Here we heard the tragic story of Rossetti's marriage. On our return to the drawing room, we told about Swinburne's letter. "He is very generous," said the old poet. "Not that anyone need be generous to you." When we moved to go, he proposed that we should first visit his study. Miss Browning kissed us and said humbly, "You will not forget us?" Mr. Browning, "If I hear that you are in town and do not let me know, I shall be deeply offended".

The room where he lives as a poet is small, with red curtains and two plain bookcases filled with old books; over the mantel-shelf is an Italian picture; there is a cast of Dante; and portraits, some vigorous studies of peasants (I should say by Pen) and a picture of Pen at his easel. There is a large chair with a screen at its back; a large desk, very worn, old, quantities of ink, et cetera, and in a black case worked in leather, the new poem. He let us glance at the ms. running in a beautiful stream of penmanship. He showed us a most humorous sketch that Rossetti made of Tennyson, reading *Maud* to Mrs. Browning. Then out of a drawer came the very book, bought for ninepence on a Florentine bookstall (white vellum, with a mixture of print and old letters) on which *The Ring and the Book* was founded. We held it in our hands, he translated to us here and there. He said how he had sent it to three novelists, but they could do nothing with it. So one fine morning he determined to work at it and began his poem. "You could have done it," he said; when we protested, he added, "not in my way". He showed us the first book he bought as a boy, Mrs. Hemans's *Commonplace Book* . . . his wife's Hebrew *Bible*, with notes in her own hand, even on *Leviticus*. He showed us the wooden box in which lie all the Beddoes mss. (a genius whose work we must read) . . . the first book which Landor bought and which he finally gave to "his best friend Robert Browning"—a Catullus. Then he showed us all the tiny classics at which his wife worked, full of her notes and still breathing her love. He had been telling us that they never knew anything of each other's work till it was finished. "We had better things to talk about than our work." Taking up a little *Euripides*, he said, "She would join my name to hers in all the books that belonged to her, she would have nothing of her own—it was very pretty of her. This explains what I meant by better things". And there was "Robert" put in front of "Elizabeth". When he thought I asked if he approved of writing together, he said, "Yes, if you are two sympathetic souls. I live lonely—I have never had help of this kind—lonely from my son. Here is my new poem—my sister has not heard a single word of it". Word was made of his wife, "Do you care for her? I hope so", he said, giving me [Edith] such an emotional push that he nearly hurt me. . . . Then we said farewell; he said, "If you don't let me know when you are in town, I shall think you have taken to chloral" (referring to Rossetti). At the door he paused, "Well, I should always think poets the most glorious things in the world". Then taking my hand, "You are be-

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ginning where I am leaving off". Then putting an arm round us, a fatherly kiss. "My blessing will not do you any harm. God bless you." He took us to the gate, and we left him with tears in our eyes, of joy and yet regret that he is so old, though his age is as noble as that to which Rabbi ben Ezra looked forward. Now you have heard all. Nothing that ever happened to me is so precious as those few moments of parting [Edith]. There was not an inch of difference in the devotion of the old gentleman to one or the other [Katherine]. He was tenderness itself, he could not have been more loving . . . of his humility, of his expressive tenderness—Oh, he deserves *The Sonnets from the Portuguese*—I cannot speak. I [Katherine] never loved him till today, now I love him dearly. . . . Oh, love! I give thanks for my Persian [Persian=cat=Puss=Edith]: those two poets man and wife, wrote alone, each wrote, but did not bless or quicken one another at their work; *we* are closer married.

(Amy Cooper to Edith Cooper.)

(On March 22, 1887, Katherine Bradley and Amy Cooper, Edith's younger sister, went to see the Brownings, who were just about to leave their house in Warwick Crescent for De Vere Gardens, Palace Gate. Edith was unable to come up to town owing to the ill-health of her parents, and they both write to her describing the visit.)

March 23, 1887.

. . . I will tell you at once about our visit. Miss Browning was alone in the drawing room when we arrived, and received us as warmly as any old friend could. . . . The old gentleman has never liked De Vere Gardens. He came there as a widower with his little boy, to be near Annabel Barrett, his wife's sister, who had settled in the neighbourhood, and—this amused me much—it would be near Paddington, when the boy should go to Oxford. Directly after tea had come, the old dear himself appeared, "You here?" he exclaimed, and came warmly forward to Sim, then greeting me.

Little Elsie had been greatly excited when we told her the night before that we were going to see the great poet. She wanted him to have her love, and to be told that she had learnt one of his "pieces". Just before we started she gave us twopence to buy a nice bunch of violets for him. At infinite trouble we did this, and secured a lovely bunch (for a shilling, but we do not tell her this); and Sim gave it almost at once to him, giving her words, "Please give them to Robert Browning". He was delighted. "We don't get flowers every day. Elsie—is that the name of the lady who gave me the violets? I must write her a little note." And down he went and stayed some minutes, writing this beautiful little letter, so beautiful that one can hardly bear to read it:

My dear Elsie,

It was very kind and good of you to send me those violets. I will keep them alive as long as possible, and long after they are dead I shall remember you affectionately, as you must remember

Your new old friend,
ROBERT BROWNING.

The little maid fully appreciates the honour and slept with the letter under her pillow, though what child could see all that it contains!

(Here Katherine Bradley takes up the account.)

Pussie [Amy] when it was not babbling of Pussie was babbling of Puss [Edith]. But it can really only shake its head for joy, to think what he was, of his warm, fondling, tender manner and watchful, loving eyes. "I want to

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strip you of all these things," he exclaimed—but wonder as to what would become of the "heapy hair" kept me from unbonneting . . . then I told him all about *A Cup of Water* and Pussie [Edith]; and what Pussie would make of it and how he was to like it, "I'll look to like, if looking liking move". In the midst of the talk, when my hand was ungloved for tea, he caught it vehemently and exclaimed, "And you do the lyrics". Truly, Love, I would fain put back the clock thirty years, and be loved by Robert Browning in his glorious manhood. He always thinks of you when he loves you —not, I am sure, of any pleasant sensation to himself; he seems full of rejoicing in one's spirit. I told him all about the Sapphics [*Long Ago*; published in 1889], and how we meant to do no more harm than George Herbert, when he took a text from the Holy Writ and wrote a hymn thereon, and I especially warned him the metres were of the plainest. "All that I can do with my poor scholarship, shall be done," he said, with evident deep interest in the project. I doubt whether the old gentleman can do much for them; but I feel that I must write one or two for him, I love him so. When he brought Elsie's letter, I told him I should be jealous, if the lady to whom I was bearing it were not much younger than I, and he said, attacking me in his sudden way, "Oh, you have quite enough letters from me". When I answered, "no"—Michael had—I had only received two—he added, "Well, you have only to write and say you are in town, and you will receive a note saying, "Come tomorrow". And yet, P., it went to my heart, to feel somehow the matureness of age about him. The whole of the mighty intellect is there, but it seems as if one had to climb a high tower to it; and the dear old gentleman was sleepy and tired. I rather grieve to think of Kensington; he will be too much harassed. . . . Puss, we will have fine times with him in Paradise. . . .

(Amy Cooper continues.)

He talked about Tennyson; he told the Laureate that he ought not to have made the hero of the first *Locksley Hall* the speaker of the second. It would spoil the joy in the first for future young readers. . . . He took Sim on his arm downstairs. In the hall he turned to me and said, "I have not talked to you much", and warmly pressed my hand. He watched me a good deal and asked Sim did this lady do anything. He seems very old, though bright; one feels a little difficulty in making him understand. I felt as though I had known him for years. He looked very tired and I fear he goes out too much.

(*To be continued*)

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A DEFENSE OF WILLA CATHER

by Archer Winsten

With the publication of *Shadows on the Rock* by Willa Cather this novelist who has been singularly free from attack in the early and middle reaches of her career suddenly experiences the bite of critical disfavour. Although it is by no means unanimous, the instigators, including Newton Arvin, John Chamberlain, Horace Gregory, Granville Hicks, Louis Kronenberger and Dorothy Van Doren, constitute a group well above the ordinary run of reviewers. If, as I think, there is an answer to the assertions, both they and Miss Cather deserve it.

Miss Cather is granted, for the most part, some good work in the past. By one she is celebrated as the defender of the individual against the petty influences of society; by another as a master of form, one whose ability to write a distinguished novel should be taken for granted; and by a third as the author of the "most human and solid" American novel (*My Antonia*) of the past twenty years. These kind prefaces to complaint follow in beaten paths of critical and lay appreciation. Miss Cather has often been praised, and for a variety of qualities and achievements. She has been spokesman of the soil for Nebraska; she has made articulate the Scandinavians, Germans and Bohemians of that country as well as the older American stock to which she belonged as a girl. For the late Stuart Sherman she was first and last expressing a sense of values. He demonstrated it in all her novels up to and including *The Professor's House*, which was her most recent when he wrote. A few years later, with *Death Comes For the Archbishop* before him, T. K. Whipple summed up Miss Cather as an extremely sane, capable and conscious artist. In those qualifications he suspected her of falling short of the very highest achievements. Her perfection came from pruning rather than from the white heat of an imagination that blazed an errorless way. Even so, he regarded her as an exemplar of the pure artist, possibly our best, and marvelled at the intelligence and will which had made so much out of her original gift. There has been little enough in the sources of these brief summaries to prepare us for the blast that followed her last book.

For she has become "a tired woman in a large city looking backward wistfully from an apartment house window to the past". Her novel is a logical step backward from its predecessor; it refuses to express a moral issue in terms of adult experience; it is comparable to the fairy-tale of Cinderella. From another point of view she is berated as a writer who "has never come to grips with the real life of her time", who "writes as if mass production and technological unemployment and cyclical depressions and the struggle between the classes did not exist". Her book is exquisite, it is consummately written, it is very delicate and very dull. When she wrote of Nebraska and its settlers she had a valid theme having to do with the development of America. It was not of our

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time, to be sure, but there were social problems for readers with that sort of thing on their minds. When the scene changes to Quebec and the social problem is merely the preservation of an old order, of a remembered feeling, rather than the struggle for a new one, the reviewer speaks of sterility.

Another gentleman sees Miss Cather's work as falling into three periods. There is the first, one of affirmation of life. Thea Kronborg, Alexandra Bergson and Antonia Shimerda carry that bright standard. Then comes the period in which life is frustrate, and Mrs. Forrester, Professor St. Peter, Claude Wheeler and Myra Henshawe show it. Finally we come to the point where life does not figure at all. Archbishop Latour, Father Joseph Vaillant, Euclide Auclair and Cécile prove that, and what was fondly taken to be Miss Cather's "noble vacation" from life in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* becomes almost complete unemployment with *Shadows on the Rock*.

No, it is not a novel at all. It is two-dimensional, like a fresco (cf. Miss Cather's own statement in connection with the Puvis de Chavannes frescoes where she speaks of writing "something without accent, with none of the artificial elements of composition".) It is splendid landscape painting. Miss Cather now "has abandoned herself to her softness". Frail and thin, her work. Shadows is the word; and the word was at hand, being on the jacket, the covers, and the title-page. "This makes it impossible for her to give any sort of valid interpretation to life; and as vision it never captures our imagination nor stirs our emotions; it is simply pretty."

These are the conclusions of our critics. If they have been rudely torn from context, at least the impression they make is not false, for the attack has been unusually violent. It is as though a tea-pot no one suspected of simmering suddenly blew its top off. And Miss Cather, obviously taken aback, said in her recently published letter that she had made an honest try and got pleasure out of it, if nobody else did.

II

It would be tedious business to try here to argue the merits of these criticisms individually, just as it would be useless, though personally satisfying, to dispute matters of taste. For instance, they are mistaken who make so much of Miss Cather's statements about the connection between childhood and art. One critic sees her as wholly successful only when she is remembering her childhood, and he recalls her use of Wagner's opinion in *The Song of the Lark*; another, seeking a reason for failure, takes her letter of Nov. 23, 1927 to *The Commonweal* and states that she says she *has* returned to childhood, when what she said was, "Writing this book . . . was *like* a happy vacation from life, a return to childhood, to early memories". In each case Miss Cather referred to the feeling, to the clearer, more vivid emotion, not the facts nor the narrow world of childhood. Not to recognize this is distortion of a dangerous sort because it departs from truth in the guise of quotation. As for questions of taste, one of our critics says "the book (*Shadows on the Rock*) is simply never real". My disagreement is tepid beside that of a Catholic writer who refers to the characters as "those living men and women, all quite real, moving and acting in time and space, yet shadows of eternity, at once symbols of and actors in the endless story of life everlasting". For a reason I shall take up later I do believe that taste, more than any other factor, has made such a wide divergence of opinion possible. I mean taste in

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the sense of the preconceived notions which form our likes and dislikes.

But let us turn to the source without further delay. The line of Miss Cather's development is in its general contours a clear one. Although she is not given to self-revelation, the few times she has spoken have been very much to the point. First, we have her reference to things she wrote while in college. She was trying to tell the story of some Scandinavian and Bohemian settlers she had known. She brands her "honest" attempts as "bald, clumsy and emotional". Doubtless they were; but the point of importance is that even then she was turning towards the subjects that had made their deep imprint on her emotions. Sarah Orne Jewett's subsequent advice was merely the confirmation of an earlier instinct. She was objective in her desire to take what she had seen and known, subjective in following the path marked by her own emotions. She was not successful on either count. The fault lay not in her material, not in her emotions, but in her method. It is not hard to believe that she felt it, for she turned to a master, Henry James, than whom no one was more full of method. That was her beginning as a conscious artist and she has never once gone back on it.

In fact, the first few years found her so preoccupied with artistry she could hardly break through to the fulness of her expression. She was not, as is so often asserted, treating material which was not her own, and she was mistaken, at least partly, when she said so in her 1922 preface to *Alexander's Bridge*. The collapse of Bartley Alexander in Boston was as much her material as were Mrs. Forrester's derelictions in Sweet Water, Nebraska. The difference in quality of those two books lay in the treatment, in a background limitation of Miss Cather which will be taken up in detail later, and in that invaluable something the significant artist adds out of his own spiritual resources.

An addition must be made to the Whipple interpretation of her as an artist. She was not merely the artist dealing with the land, the society, or a person. These things vary in her books; the other is never stinted. She is always the artist of the idea. She has expressed it through the mouth of Fred Ottenburg when he spoke of Thea Kronborg. The quotation is long but worth its length. "It's the idea, the basic idea, pulsing behind every bar she sings. She simplifies a character down to the musical idea it's built on, and makes everything conform to that. . . . Instead of inventing a lot of business and expedients to suggest character, she knows the thing at the root, and lets the musical pattern take care of her. The score pours her into all those lovely postures, makes the light and shadow go over her face, lifts and drops her." After making the obvious substitutions, it becomes clear that Fred in his cups was telling the truth about Miss Cather as much as about Thea.

That this connection is not fanciful is amply proven elsewhere. Her last two books have been notable examples of simplifying character to what seems to her its most significant aspect, of doing away with expedients and wholesale invention. And in her letters dealing with them she has made still more explicit her attempt. Is not there something about them reminiscent of musical tone-poems? Also, the preface to *Alexander's Bridge* mentions "the essential matter" of the story, which is "the basic idea" under another name. This, she asserts, is not arguable. The artist has seen it, felt it; it has come to him with an immediacy comparable to that of life itself. The only debatable point, for the artist, is one of presentation.

Bearing these things in mind, we can, per-

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haps, summarize them as follows: Miss Cather started with a deep feeling for her experiences. For expression she turned to the art of writing. The struggle with new forms tended to submerge her feeling. At the same time, she was moving forward to her conception of the "basic idea" as a unifying principle of whatever she might write. It was fully formed when she wrote *Alexander's Bridge*. Still there was something lacking, the depths and realities of her emotions. And so, she turned back to her original subjects which had always been associated with deep feeling. They had first call, so to speak, on her loyalty to the past. Later, having answered the call, she could extend the same loyalty to more distant, though not too distant, realms. She turned also from artifice to the art of simplicity. *O Pioneers* was written, and the rest is the story of her gradual strengthening of the power of her art and of her choice of scene and "basic idea".

III

It is not necessary to spend much space on Miss Cather's art because there cannot be any question about it. True, from the time she turned away from artificiality in composition until the past few years, her novels showed a certain looseness of structure and unevenness of pace. But that certainly could not be said of her last two books. In them there is a marvellous fidelity to mood, and the structure is no less faithful to its purpose. They are the undeniable climax to Miss Cather's long search for mastery of her art. On their grander, more complex scale, they are as perfect as *A Lost Lady*. As for their not being novels, this is an especially poor time, in the midst of almost fantastic experiments in form, to draw the line at their comparatively mild departures. They are fiction, they create character, and they tell a story. To regard them simply as chronicles or inspired historical work is to miss the better part of what was put into them.

That brings us back to Miss Cather's "basic ideas". They are things known within her spiritual and imaginative existence. They have to do most often with values, with ways of living, with the peace, whatever it may be, that a man makes with his god before he dies. She gives them to us for all they may be worth, not with a hand that shatters what it offers. She does not hate or scorn the matter which obsesses her. Is not this just a little strange and original among serious writers today? Or is it, after all, that her calmness comes from having failed to grasp any sort of reality?

It comes down to this: are these things of no importance, are they divorced from reality now that we have big cities, "mass production", "technological unemployment", and critics in whom the knife must be turned twice in the wound before it is felt? In *Alexander's Bridge* we have a question of loyalties. Shall a man live out his fullest potentialities when to do so means the rejection of all that his life has been and the flouting of his established responsibilities to persons and to society? The answer is "No". Stuart Sherman said that later Miss Cather would have answered differently. At any rate, she did in *A Lost Lady*, although the book is less an answer than a presentation. In *O Pioneers* and *My Antonia* we are given the full measure of a woman's strength, the lifelong heroism of daily living. The struggle of an artist towards expression is *The Song of the Lark*. *One of Ours* is the quest of a boy to find his own spirit. *The Professor's House* is the way a man learns to keep on living when he knows the best things are past. The price that life can and sometimes

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does exact from a too impetuous person, that is *My Mortal Enemy*. The establishment of one of the great systems of living and the agents of that establishment are *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. And *Shadows on the Rock* represents the endurance of a civilization which is dear to its possessors, the transplanting of a way of life to alien surroundings.

These have been very rough approximations of things so deeply imbedded in these books that they cannot be taken out whole. Even so, I cannot feel they are matters in any way affected by political, social, economic or philosophical considerations of today. I cannot see that their strength is vitiated by being set in the past or that they are made to seem better than they actually are by the use of a nostalgic atmosphere. Their source is life itself and if in them, life is somewhat simplified for the idea, Miss Cather's extraordinarily vivid sensuous imagery binds us again to the world of sight, sound and feeling that we know. She defined her work for us in writing of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* that it was "a conjunction of the general and the particular, like most works of the imagination". Again the "basic idea", again her art fleshing the general with experience, remembered or imagined. If that flesh be composed of significant minutiae, said to be a characteristic of feminine writing, so much the better for feminine writing when the concept still unifies the whole as in the best of Miss Cather's work.

We should not, on the other hand, overlook definite limitations which led, at times, to partial failure. In *One of Ours* the last part of the book fails, especially when contrasted with the first. If Miss Cather had been less magnificent in the beginning, her war scenes would not have suffered so much. They were adequate enough descriptions which might have been written by someone who had been there; someone, but not Miss Cather. She certainly would have brought back scenes less easily forgotten. And with that failure the mood broke down. It was recaptured at intervals behind the lines in old houses and among people with whom the author was familiar. The story might have been successful, it almost was. It was not supposed to be a war story in any strict sense. It was Claude Wheeler's uncertain quest made successful through the accident of war. That quest was certainly Miss Cather's material, but the war got in the way, just as the artificial form, and the unfamiliar scene, too, detracted from *Alexander's Bridge*.

The idea can be thoroughly consistent with her usual preoccupations, but let her try to place it in surroundings with which she is not exceedingly intimate, and it suffers. She can know perfectly, but it is not enough. It was not enough that she knew so much about Professor St. Peter and his family and the college community; Tom Outland carried the book off to New Mexico, one of her beloved lands, and it never really came back. Her own emotional realization of the story seemed inhibited, and with the failure of her mood, she became just another intelligent writer. This dependence on certain scenes argues a limitation but not a fault. A similar narrowing of the possibilities can be traced in the choice of her chief characters. As one would expect, it goes back to her "basic ideas" which are always concerned with values and a way of life. She does not always confine herself to values which are entirely her own, and thereby she achieves some variety; but they must be associated closely enough to engender the lyric feeling which is one of the distinctions of her work. For the writing of each book she must run

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a difficult gauntlet. She is dedicated to the consideration of values; she is dependent upon the type of scene that moves her; the choice of a protagonist is limited by her values; and she must write so that a mood reinforces what she says.

From one point of view these are limitations. From another, they become the ground on which, the material with which, she rears her structure. The western plains, Santa Fe, and Quebec are used (she has to have them), but with an honest eye on their own reality. One test of her creativity as opposed to mere photography is that after her we see and feel more in those places. Her characters also are used, though never by tampering with their reality. They are chosen because they represent her idea, or possibly her idea occasionally flows out of them. But a character is never twisted to her purpose. The idea, the character, the scene—with how consummate an art the balance among these factors is achieved in her several faultless works. She is a great artist in her field, and that field is not small, though its boundaries may be clear.

IV

It is my contention that *Shadows on the Rock* demonstrably falls into the direct line of Miss Cather's work and is by no means the least important. Had it no deeper merits, it could stand as a *tour de force* demonstrating the sustained magic of a mood, the perfect fitting of style to content, the choice of incident proper to mood, and the carrying strength of a quiet voice. For years Miss Cather has been working towards this unobtrusive art. There are levels of existence which cannot be touched by the dramatic and comparatively strident technique of both the conventional and unconventional novel as we know it. And in this novel we have one of those levels brought to a beautiful realization. Had there not been a paleness as of silver, a thin note of something so delicate and fine that it must be carefully guarded, the whole job would have fallen through. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* Miss Cather, working with a more generous theme, did not bind herself to quite so subtle a task. And for that reason this book is her greatest triumph as an artist.

But she has not stopped with artistry, though certain of her critics did, and some of them did not get that far. As in her previous books, she had a solid foundation, a new change rung on her old and persistent theme of a way of living. This time it was a culture brought by a few Catholic-French families to Quebec. Had I not seen this point persistently ignored in the reviews, I should have thought it impossible to miss. Early in the book there is a description of Madame Auclair shortly before her death which says everything. "Then she would think fearfully of how much she was entrusting to that little shingled head; something so precious, so intangible; a feeling about life that had come down to her through so many centuries and that she had brought with her across the wastes of obliterating, brutal ocean. The sense of 'our way'—that was what she longed to leave with her daughter. She wanted to believe that when she herself was lying in this rude Canadian earth, life would go on almost unchanged in this room with its dear (and, to her, beautiful) objects; that the proprieties would be observed, all the little shades of feeling which make the common fine. The individuality, the character of M. Auclair's house, though it appeared to be made up of wood and cloth and a little silver, was really made of very fine moral qualities in two women, the mother's unswerving fidelity to certain tra-

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ditions, and the daughter's to her mother's wish." There is the gist which the book develops in full. Those qualities, fidelity, loyalty, that feeling about life.

To say that these are copy-book maxims, the stuff for a fairy story, is absurd. They lie too close to a present-day reality; they are reinforced by the fact that Quebec is much more like a bit of France than any other part of Canada is like a section of England. Does it not seem strange to us, even unreal, that today, twenty miles out of Quebec there should be a famous shrine of great healing power and a small town slowly building a huge cathedral? How does it happen? It happens because there was a beginning made two or three hundred years ago of which *Shadows on the Rock* is the expression. How easy it is to imagine our sturdy critics faced with a flesh-and-blood Auclair or Cécile. "But this man is incredible," they exclaim. "This little girl is a paragon of virtue," and turning away together, snicker her out of existence.

I can understand how some people could find this book foreign to their beliefs and, taken personally, distasteful. But I should convict those who attacked Miss Cather's latest work in the way they did of a serious lack of imagination. Faced with a way of living that was strange, or insignificant, or obnoxious to them, they failed to see their reactions as marking their own limitations. Instead, it was Miss Cather who was getting soft, whose characters lacked reality, whose book was simply pretty, but never moving. As a matter of fact, she has said that although she could admire, she could not wholly accept the feeling about life and human fate which was her subject. Acceptable or not, she did it justice. It seems to me that her imagination succeeded admirably where those of her critics failed. In extenuation it can be said that some of their failures were not ignoble. They too had ideas about a way of living; and what could be more natural than that Miss Cather's presentation and everything connected with it should suffer in the contrast? And what could be more annoying to one like myself whose emotional bias, as strong as that of the reviewers, was formed by what I consider the perfect art and moving theme of *Shadows on the Rock*.

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THE SHOESTRING BOOK COLLECTOR

by Walter R. Brooks

I BUY books for what's in 'em," said a friend of mine the other day. "I wouldn't give a plugged cent for all the first editions these wealthy collectors and dealers bid up to outrageous prices at the book auctions. That is, so far as their intrinsic value goes," he added. "Naturally I'd like to own 'em for the money they'd bring from the idiots who buy 'em. Poe's *Tamerlane* bringing $20,000 at auction! It's ridiculous! Can the owner get any more pleasure out of reading the poem when he's paid that sum for it than I can from reading it in that little edition of Poe that I paid $4 for, second hand, up there on the top shelf? They're decent sized books to hold; the type and paper are good. What more could I get out of his copy? The printed page is and can be nothing but the vehicle for the author's thought; all you can ask of it is that it offer the least obstruction possible. Good paper, a well laid out type page, easily read type and a minimum of typographical errors. What more do you want?"

"Yet you've got a rather nice collection here," I said, looking around at his shelves.

"Collection!" he snorted. "This isn't a collection; it's a library! I'm no collector. I simply like to read. And like most people that like to read, I like to own the books I read —at least those I want to read again. And I don't much care to read any book that I shan't want to read again some day. Collection! That's the great trouble with all this publicity about the immense prices paid for some of these first editions. It has turned a lot of people who really cared for reading into collectors—fixed their attention on the money value of the books they buy. And that's a bad thing."

I got up and looked along the shelves nearest me.

"Just the same," I said, "you're a collector, whether you like it or not. Here's a first edition of Cabell's *Line of Love*. I don't know a great deal about it, but I have an idea it's worth about $25. And here are all of O. Henry's. Just as I thought—all firsts, and worth—well, at least several times what you paid for them. And why are you saving this book of Arnold's poems?"

"Matthew Arnold gave it to my father when he came to America to lecture. There's an inscription in the front."

"H'm! Association item," I murmured. "I suppose you'd get just as much pleasure out of a modern reprint of that book?"

"That's different," he replied. "And as for that Cabell book, I bought it when it came out, because I wanted it. Though I don't think so much of him as I did then. I shall sell that one."

"A good many of the collectors agree with you on that," said I. "They think that Cabell has had his day. They don't like to read him so much any more, and so they don't buy him."

"Got more sense than I'd have believed," he grumbled. "But what's that you say about those O. Henrys? They worth something, too?"

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I had a bookseller's catalogue in my pocket. I took it out and referred to it. "There are only two of them listed here. *The Gentle Grafter* at $12, and *The Four Million* at $30. But you've got the lot, and they're all good. *Cabbages and Kings* is worth $60 to $70. I know, because I've got a copy."

Presently he had taken the catalogue away from me and was running through it and comparing it with some of the books on his shelves. He was still at this pleasant occupation when I left him. For silly though it may be, it is always pleasant to know that something you own is a rarity for which other men are seeking.

I have spoken of this man because he is typical. He has the utmost scorn for the type of collector who knows and cares little about the ideas contained in the books he buys. But for one of this type, there are fifty who read and reread their treasures. The fact that a book is worth $100 in the open market may not augment the pleasure you get from reading it, but it certainly need not spoil it, and it may add to it a pleasure of a different kind. Moreover, the book field is wide; there is room for collectors of all degrees of erudition and ignorance, of a rich variety of motives and specialties.

Unfortunately, the wide publicity given to the spectacular prices paid and obtained for certain rarities by such dealers as Dr. Rosenbach has disgusted many booklovers, who feel that such prices are somehow an insult to the names of men, many of whom died in poverty for lack of a tenth of what a few scraps of their handwriting would bring today. The man who should profit, they feel, is the author, and he is dead. Perhaps there is a flaw in their reasoning, but I am not concerned with the logic of their opinions. That is how they feel. Emphasis on these huge prices, too, has made the field appear narrow, and has thus scared off men of moderate means, who do not realize that they could collect happily and inexpensively for fifty years without ever knowing that Dr. Rosenbach existed.

The books that have been written on collecting—those of A. Edward Newton, for instance, or the recent volume by Barton Currie—contain plenty of advice for the wealthy collector, but there is very little meat in them for the man who cannot afford to write checks in at least three figures for his purchases. Very little mention is made of certain specialized fields in which interesting collections can be got together for a few hundred dollars or less. Seldom is it so much as hinted that there are hundreds of first editions of English and American authors, just as sure of fame, just as important artistically and intellectually as those that bring huge prices in the auction rooms, which can be bought for from one to five dollars. For rarity in itself is worth nothing. There were plenty of worthless books printed in the last few centuries of which probably not more than a dozen copies are still in existence. They're rare—but you wouldn't give them shelf room.

Every man who buys books he likes because he wants to own them is a collector. He may buy books that have to do with his work or profession. He may collect first editions, early American humour, detective stories, books about Lincoln, railroads, or any one of a thousand subjects. Or he may simply be concerned with getting together, inexpensively and without regard to rarity, enough for a few shelves. But whichever kind of collector he is, he will get little help from the writers of books, however interesting and entertaining, on book collecting.

Not that he wants to be told what to buy. Well known collectors have from time to time published lists of books which they con-

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sidered the most important and most worth collecting. And there are plenty of sheep to follow their lead, as the dealers can testify. But the man who really loves books prefers to pick his own winners. He wants no condescending kibitzer leaning over his shoulder and playing his game for him.

Nevertheless, if he's new at the game, he's not above picking up a few hints and listening to a few suggestions as to how it can be played most entertainingly and profitably. And it's just these hints and suggestions that he finds it so hard to get. He may as a matter of fact have got the impression that it's a rich man's game and have hesitated to play it at all.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The rich men play the game, but they play it in their own little field—and there are a thousand other fields, just as inviting, just as well adapted for the game, into which the rich men haven't come, simply because the prices haven't been high enough to tempt them. And in any of these fields the man with from fifty cents to five dollars in his pocket can find plenty of fun.

Take my own case. My library contains some 3000 volumes. Three or four hundred of these were inherited, the rest have been gathered together over a period of twenty-five years. I have never paid as much as $10 for a book, although many of them are now worth a good deal more than that. Perhaps a fourth of them were bought new. Probably a third of them cost me from five to fifty cents apiece. I have no idea what the library is worth now, but I do know that it is worth a good deal more than I paid for it. Of course, it isn't a lot that would set the collectors twittering. It is a reading library of books "in good second-hand condition", as the catalogues say, containing a certain proportion of moderately scarce volumes, and kept on the shelves because for one reason or another I want to reread them some day. It has been got together by much haunting of second-hand bookshops and much searching for bargains—could have been got together in no other way, for while I have had much pleasure in gathering it, it represents a very small outlay of money, perhaps not more than an average of $2.50 a week.

Now leaving aside as too undignified for notice those wealthy numskulls whose only pleasure in their collections is derived from increasing values, the book buyer falls into one of two classes: either he has a feeling for first editions, or he cares nothing for them. "I suppose", says Dr. Rosenbach, "there are people—I have been told there are people—who would just as soon have an edition of Keats's *Poems*, for example, well printed on good paper, in a handsome modern binding, as a first edition in the original boards! I only hope I shall never meet them!" "As objects to be desired", says Edmund Lester Pearson, "for their own sake, without regard to reading, they (first editions) excite me no more than does old blue china. A Thackeray or Dickens novel in its 'original parts' may thrill a collector, as one of the rare triangular Cape of Good Hope stamps could once have thrilled me. Otherwise, it is about as convenient as an automobile in its original parts."

But even the man who cares for first editions need be no Rockefeller to indulge his tastes. Firsts of Keats and Shelley, Blake and Poe are out of reach, of course, but how about Longfellow, Whittier, Mark Twain, for instance, many of whose firsts are offered at a dollar or two? He would have to pay several hundred dollars for a *Tom Sawyer*, but good copies of *A Tramp Abroad, Life on the Mississippi*, or *The American Claimant* can be had for around $5, and other titles are even lower in price. And Mark Twain, from

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the collector's point of view, is an important author. There are dozens of others, writers of the first rank, whose firsts are even cheaper. Consider the Victorians, whom, with the exception of Hardy, the collectors have skipped over. Tennyson, Browning, Henry James and Meredith are as fine a quartet of writers as English literature has to show. Yet here are a few quotations from recent catalogues: *Gareth and Lynette*, $2.50; *Tiresias*, $1; *Maud*, $4; *Enoch Arden*, $4; *Becket*, $1; *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, $3; *Balaustion's Adventure*, $2.50; *La Saisiaz*, $3; *Red Cotton Night Cap Country*, $2.50; *The Wheel of Time*, $2; *The Aspern Papers*, $2; *Notes of a Son and Brother*, $1.50; *The Wings of the Dove* (2 vols.), $4.50; *The Sacred Fount*, $3; *The Awkward Age*, $2; *Tale of Chloe*, $6; *Selected Poems*, $3; *A Reading of Earth*, $2; *The Tragic Comedians*, $4; *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life*, $2. Of course, not all the firsts of these authors can be bought so reasonably. Some of the rarer titles are much more expensive, and inscribed and association books are always much more. But certainly the books of these authors at such prices as I have quoted will not be available for long. The Victorians have been under a cloud for a number of years, but signs indicate that they are again becoming popular, and when they do the prices will soar.

A point to be remembered is that prices will vary greatly in different shops, particularly nowadays, for though the book market has taken severe punishment during the depression, some dealers still refuse to mark down their wares. Firsts of *Tiresias*, *Maud* and *Becket* are quoted by a certain bookstore at $20, $45 and $20 respectively, as compared with $1, $4 and $1 at another store. Condition is often responsible for these discrepancies, since a book in prime condition is worth several times what a battered copy will bring. But obviously it is as well to shop around a little before buying.

But if such books are beyond the financial reach of the collector—as they have usually been beyond mine—there are modern authors, writing today, whose first editions will in a few years be eagerly snapped up. Just as a game, what is more entertaining than to back his own judgment and buy firsts of the authors he believes in, as they come out? In the case of English authors it costs very little more to buy, as they come out, the English first editions, which are the ones that will be collected. Or, if he can't afford that, let him watch the second-hand stores and the tables of discarded books and remainders in the lending libraries and department stores. That is what I have done. I have a first edition of *Ethan Frome* that cost me 20 cents, Cabell's *Cords of Vanity* that I picked up for a quarter, Crane's *Open Boat*, also a quarter, and a *Damnation of Theron Ware* for which I paid 35 cents. These four books for $1.05, and they are worth today somewhere around a hundred times that.

Needless to say I did not buy them because I hoped they would increase in value, but because I wanted to read them. The fact that there is now a demand for them is merely a pleasant proof that my judgment was sound. How sound will it be with regard to such authors as Grace Zaring Stone, whose books I am buying today?

There are other writers who have never been popular; whose books are out of print and scarce because unsought for; yet who may one day come into their own. A number of years ago I had picked up odd volumes by Stella Benson, Arthur Machen, E. Nesbit and H. H. Munro—to name four who are now being reprinted and rediscovered and

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whose firsts are in some demand. I have on my shelves books by a dozen other authors who have never had the popularity they deserve, but who will some day, I believe, come back. If they don't, I don't care; they still please me. But if they do, my judgment is vindicated, and my library worth more. There is Rowland E. Robinson, for instance, who wrote in the nineties some fine stories of Vermont life. There is Neil Munro, whose Scotch historical novels have been compared with Stevenson's—a rather foolish comparison, since all the two had in common were Scotch birth and a fine style. There are Arthur Colton's short stories, Henry Baerlein's novels and travel books, the prose romances of William Morris and the ghost stories of M. R. James.

Outside of general literature, the number of fields in which the collector may play is limited only by his interests. There is the vast and tangled forest of Americana, through which he can hew a path of his own. Books about local history, about Lincoln or Washington or Lee, about railroads, medicine, canals, pirates, the Spanish-American War, etiquette, aviation, slavery, golf, Indians, whaling—there is no end to them. The search for out-of-print books on any such subject may be carried on in several ways. You can get one of the dealers who specialize in out-of-print books to search for you. But it is more sporting and a great deal more fun to take the trail in person. You'll wear out lots of shoe leather, get your fingers dirty and your nose full of dust, but with a handful of small change as ammunition, you will be surprised at the fine specimens you will occasionally bring down.

Not one in ten of my books have I bought in the usual way through a regular bookstore. I can't afford to. If it is a new book that has just come out, sooner or later I pick it up for a quarter or seventy-five cents in a second-hand store or a lending library discard counter. But suppose it is one of the classics I want. I no longer shy away from the classics, though when I left school my idea of them was that they were long, dull, difficult books that one was supposed to struggle through for self-improvement. It took me a long time to realize that they were just the books that the largest number of people have enjoyed, that the great number of editions of them still available bore witness to their readability; for, after all, it is only a few dull prigs and pendants who will read dull books to improve themselves.

Suppose I want Dickens, for instance, or Jane Austen. If I could afford it, I would probably go to the first bookstore and get the best set money could buy. As I can't, I look around for a second-hand set. Now there are all sorts of sets of the classics. The cheaper ones are likely to be poorly edited, or badly printed on paper that will disintegrate or turn yellow in a few years. The finer recent sets are expensive. But you can always find a sound set, thirty to fifty years old, at a reasonable price. And the earlier sets have this to recommend them—they have a flavour of the past that is in harmony with the time in which the author lived and wrote.

But perhaps even such a set may be too expensive for me, or I may prefer to buy the books as I read them. In that case I have a choice of a number of inexpensive, and well printed and edited reprints, such as Everyman's Library, the Modern Library, Macmillan's Modern Reader's Series, Bohn's Library, and those published by the Oxford University Press. Dollar and seventy-five-cent reprints of the best more recent books I can buy in the drug-stores.

Or I can pick up odd volumes second hand. I have, for instance, all of Hardy in a ragged-

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looking shelf, bought one by one in second-hand stores as I read them, at an average of 50 cents apiece. Three of them are now worth five times what the whole shelf cost me. For the rest, they are sound, well printed copies, with the exception of three very cheap and badly made reprints which I may replace some day with better copies if I run across them at half a dollar apiece. Or even less—for right now the second-hand dealers are reducing stocks, and prices are very low. I bought yesterday for 35 cents a good copy of Christina Rossetti's *Poems*, and for 10 cents each two of Sarah P. McLean Greene's fine Cape Cod stories.

But whatever one buys, he should follow his own taste. There is *no* book that "no gentleman's library should be without". If I dislike both Shakespeare and Harold Bell Wright, there is no more reason why I should buy one than the other. Lists of the "hundred best books" that various prominent people have got out from time to time may be suggestive, but to follow them slavishly is a dull and silly business for anyone with a reasonable amount of taste and intelligence.

A good deal of whimsy—some of it graceful, and some of it pretty nauseating—has been woven about the second-hand bookshop. It is pictured as a dim and delightful place, full of dusty treasures and inhabited by a sweet and immensely learned old man with a long white beard and a few not too obtrusive spots on his vest. The Morley influence has added to this a scent of excellent pipe tobacco.

But as a matter of fact most of the quaintness you find in the second-hand book trade you will bring into it yourself, consciously or unconsciously. The charm of a bookshop lies in the books themselves not in the setting or in the proprietor. Some of the dealers are fusty old parties clad in whiskers and cobwebs, but most of them are efficient and up to date, and all of them are concerned with making a living. Nor are they necessarily acquainted with the contents of the books they sell you, though many of them are widely read and are willing to drop in your ear helpful hints that may widen the field of your interest. At least they are always glad to see you in their shops, moving along the shelves and pulling out a volume here and there to sample the contents. And they let you alone; they don't bustle up and suggest books you aren't the least interested in, or demand to know what you want. They have wisely refrained from the offensive modern sales methods employed by the clerks in many regular book stores. I know of only one second-hand bookstore to enter which one must have a definite purpose in mind. I went into it one day a year or two ago, and was practically thrown out because I said there was nothing I specially wanted, but thought I'd like to look around.

"Just want to look around, do you!" exclaimed the owner. "Well, I don't want fellows like you in here—handling all the books and getting everything mixed up! What do you think this is, a free library?"

But this sort of boorishness you will very rarely meet.

Now this sampling—"browsing", if you are a whimsico-sentimentalist—is something that you should be prepared to do a good deal of. It is a form of treasure-hunting that can be carried on without the trouble and expense of fitting out an expedition, its intellectual rewards are certain, and its pecuniary rewards occasionally great. You may turn up one of the thousand-dollar prizes in the next junk shop you poke your nose into. I never have, but I am confident that I shall some day. And in the meantime I have unearthed a good many five-dollar, and a few fifty-dollar

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items. I know of no other game of chance so entertaining and so profitable, for the odds are in the player's favour, and increase with wider knowledge. Not that it's a sure thing, by any means. But speaking as a beginner in the penny-ante class, who seldom plays higher than a fifty-cent limit, I'm pretty well ahead.

Just now I am picking up books of early American humour, for from ten to fifty cents apiece: Artemus Ward, Nasby, Burdette, Orpheus C. Kerr, Philander Q. K. Doesticks and a dozen others who have fallen into oblivion, but whose books tell more about the life of their times than many heavy histories, and whose humour, even when it has gone a little flat—and it is surprising how much sparkle there is in much of it—has a quaint funniness that makes it well worth dipping into. Collectors have not paid much attention to these minor humorists. Perhaps they never will. Perhaps my investment of eight dollars will never pay a dividend, and the lot will finally be sold as waste paper. I don't believe it; I don't believe that collectors can afford to neglect this rich vein of pure Americana. But if they do, I don't care, for I've had my fun.

On the other hand, maybe the prices set on them in the dealers' catalogues will begin to creep up, from $1 and $1.50 where they are now to $2 and $3 and $4; maybe collectors of American humour will increase and multiply, thus increasing and multiplying the value of the small collection I shall have got together. Who then more pleased than I? For nothing is pleasanter than to present a fulfilled prophecy to the cashier and have him hand you a small bundle of bills.

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THE ILLUSION OF JOSEPH CONRAD

by Irvin Anthony

It was growing late in the century. The grimness of Henley's *Invictus* had long before made the Church of England snort and pass by. Stevenson had been dead four years, and even devout Presbyterians were forgetting his foibles. By means of pen and postcard Mr. Gladstone had made the reputation of a novel or two. In short, the year was eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, and Joseph Conrad, recovered after the long travail of Almayer and his folly, published two books and offered the first offhand phrasing of his credo. *The Nigger of the Narcissus* and *Tales of Unrest* were the books. The credo—ah, that is the story.

The year was not one of simplicities. There had been a deal of strutting, of posing and solemn foolery. The methods of politics had infringed upon both the arts and letters. The charlatan had assumed most engagingly the manners of his betters, and the public voted faith in none. Naturally, pronouncements of faith seemed ill thought upon, and as for a credo—that was taboo. It was, in fact, a hazardous time to undertake the wily craft of words without the help of Mr. Gladstone, yet Conrad launched his novel, which was brief, his first collection of short stories, and the earliest groping expression of his "I believe".

He began it in *The Nigger*, almost at the book's end. The crew of the *Narcissus* had been paid and were passing from the shipping office to vanish from Conrad's sight as shipmates have always done:

> They were bound for the Black Horse where men, in fur caps, with brutal faces and in shirt sleeves, dispense out of varnished barrels the illusions of strength, mirth, happiness, the illusion of splendour and poetry of life, to the paid-off crews of southern-going ships.

A fetching word that, illusion! A word of reflection spoken of a remembered vision, a glimpse of seamen hard upon the heels of their joy. It suggested so much more than its seemingly sinister import of failing in truth. In the very shadows of the picture lay its rounded reality. Perhaps Conrad liked the word, tasted well its fruits, and found it good for, in his other book of the year, in *The Return* came this:

> . . . She was the incarnation of all the short moments which every man spares out of his life for dreams, for precious dreams that concrete the most cherished, the most profitable of his illusions.

So he identified illusions with precious dreams, but beyond that he was not then ready or willing to go. The phases of illusion, their relative worth and power, those had to wait until he had tried more adequate expression of his idea. Yet almost at once, in a second story, the sombre *Outpost of Progress*, he wrote:

> . . . Nobody knows what suffering or sacrifice means—except, perhaps, the victims of the mysterious purpose of these illusions.

And again, in that short tale *The Lagoon*:

> . . . and he looked beyond the great light of a cloudless day into the darkness of a world of illusions.

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The credo was begun, possibly undetected as such by its creator—although that is a dangerous assumption—a random firing into the air. Who dare plumb a depth so subjective, so personal across thirty memoried years, locked now within the silence of death? In any case it was but partly formed—without prophetic fire, with no promise that it would colour his work to the end. In so shadowy a beginning there was no basis for classification, for analysis. That waited for the years, each with its labour and its step forward in the statement of belief.

In *Karain*, one of Conrad's disputed favourites from *Tales of Unrest*, *we have a* simple statement:

> . . . his quality was to appear clothed in the illusion of unavoidable success.

There followed through the years of creation a series of definitions, corollaries, epigrams based upon maxims, call them what you will. Each touched in illumination for a swift second some corner of this great darkness of illusion. The estimable Captain Whalley, that model of professional righteousness, was guided by his instinct to select the for him mysterious necessity:

> He wanted the illusion of affairs, and his acquisition of *The Fair Maid* preserved the continuity of life.

Continuity of life—there was an advance. It furnished a focus for the need of illusion, the remedial qualities embodied in this writing of impressions. Before, there had been single, pointed statements, obvious, but not discursive, not offering foothold for the philosophic rounding out of revelation. The doctrine of illusion had been offered without any indicated course or bent but in this pervasive illusion of affairs we touch something no longer sporadic, something that identifies it with the genus of dogma. The casual theory bade fair to become a theorem, to pass over into an intellectual object for the mind alone and to cease being a delicate web but dimly seen, like a storied arras astir in a wind breath.

Grand-uncle Nicholas B., the beneficent, spoken of in *A Personal Record* as a man who had eaten dog, and who thus inspired his grand-nephew with both horror and attraction, did not escape the shadow of Napoleon in Russia to lose so signal a distinction as that of having partaken of canine flesh:

> He had eaten him to appease his hunger, no doubt, but also for the sake of an unappeasable and patriotic desire, in the glow of a great faith that lives still, and in the pursuit of a great illusion kindled like a false beacon by a great man to lead astray the effort of a brave nation.

Of such is the adumbration of patriotism. A difficult, involved aberration this, implying belief in the freedom of Poland, faith in the word of the greatest soldier, trust in the destiny of the Bonaparte; such it was to the cavalier uncle. A soldier's dream? A gentleman's hope, refusing to acknowledge the part of fact, rushing headlong to the sum of imagined truth. This was the artistry of grand-uncle Nicholas B. as seen through the glass of his reflective grand nephew.

And of artistry, too, there is a dream. It is in *Notes on Life and Letters*, when the master had been twenty years and more from his quarterdeck. Perhaps he had grown a little weary over the years, for there lingered the wistfulness of a gentle melancholy upon his words, and yet the attitude of wide-eyed wonder at the content of the thought, too:

> And I would not grudge him the proud illusion that will come sometimes to a writer: the illusion that his achievement has almost equalled the greatness of his dream.

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This was clearly a more unusual ecstasy, a complex idea that could not be reached by so many as that of success, or affairs, or the great illusion of the effort of a brave nation, led astray by a false beacon. Still fewer, perhaps, can feel even faintly the wistful note of glamour which creeps into the description of the *Otago*. She was the first command. Captain Conrad looked upon her as a master-mariner, under the Red Ensign, the only man of his nation to be so certificated, and when he had described her from several viewpoints came the words:

> The illusion of life and character which charms one in men's finest handiwork radiated from her.

A kindly touch that, placing the ship with a stroke among the precious, intimate things of life, the things in which the very scars and blemishes become lyric or epic, depending upon our connotation of them, the things of love, of devotion, of the innermost heart.

That all this might lead to an apex, finding for itself a conclusion, Conrad selected an ultimate illusion. It was in *Nostromo*, the least personal of all the novels, the least known to the public, that he put his appraisal of the world of imagination into the mouth of Decoud. The sophisticated young Costaguanian was talking with the lovely Antonia:

> I have no patriotic illusions. I have only the supreme illusion of a lover.

So ended the reader's opportunity for a desultory, impulsive comparison. Here in a breath was a choice the whole world could understand. Soldier, sailor, artist had nothing to bar them from meditating upon this superlative, which nowhere else did Conrad deny. It stands as his sense of the sublime, the ultimate delight to which the imagination could lend itself. One thing is certain; the original idea had grown by partition, had become truly a thing of degree. Conrad did not amplify by manifold examples. Perhaps he felt further emphasis upon this supreme illusion would have involved his personal reserve, would have intruded upon his reticent pride, which would bear no crowding, destroying his artistic aloofness. He never wore his heart upon his sleeve. Solitude, undisputed, he held as a decorous rite. "We live, as we dream—alone."

II

"Let all thy words have the accent of heroic truth", wrote Marcus Aurelius upon his ivory tablets. It was one of the emperor's fragmentary austerities that daunted Conrad, and made him offer his own reader sincerity in good faith, and then the further promise of "truth of a modest sort". Yet, by the time he had woven the fabric of his tale he had created more than verisimilitude. Wonder broke upon the reader and left him delving for the fuller burden of the words, rapt, caught in strange delight. Of such were Conrad's illusions; of such too is heroic truth.

When Conrad's Marlowe, the ubiquitous Marlowe, the genius who exhibits Heyst and Lord Jim alike, stands alone in Patusan he is granted a revelation. He waits, feeling that the intense unreality of the silence has blotted out even the memory of action:

> It was a strange and melancholy illusion, evolved half consciously like all our illusions, which I suspect only to be visions of remote, unattainable truth seen dimly.

Illusion—truth, there is the identity. Visions for an instant, sudden evanescent gleams, slow-growing subtleties bursting suddenly, travail ended, were both before and after the novel of Heyst. In *Victory*, the story of a philosophy of negation and what became of it, fifteen years after that of jubilee, Conrad qualified the argument of his doctrine. He

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pointed his idea with purpose, so that the desultorily pronounced gospel of illusion might be casual no longer. In the fashion of a man absorbed in contemplation he hung life, the stars, the universe upon his words, and his truth is surely as heroic as even Marcus Aurelius could ask it to be:

> For every age is fed on illusions, lest men should renounce life early and the human race come to an end.

Brave enough to grace the tongue of a hero. It smacks of equal truth to those who hold our world to be a pith ball battled for by the laws of science, or a globe of precious filigree, exciting mingled pleasure and compassion in the eyes of its several gods. All charge of casual utterance are met and the varied repetitions are put at one. Captain Whalley's affairs, Karain's success, Granduncle Nicholas B.'s Napoleon, Decoud's love for Antonia, all become reasons for not renouncing life. More, these possessions maintain its continuity for all four of the group. Life must go on for its dream, for the heroic shadows, for the verifying of perspective, for the denial of the thought that it leads nowhere and matters nothing.

Life hangs upon that statement in *Victory*. In a sentence is expounded the insatiable hunger of man that is living, his unwillingness to face the glittering star-points, or even the warmth of the sun without seeking subterfuge. It puts fair language manfully against the flatness of broken hearts and suicide. Candid, complete sincerity breathes in the words, benign, patient. One may object to them as resigned, as too calm, but they are not cold nor heedless. Conrad wrote somewhere, "Resignation is not indifference", and with the sense of humanity, the kinship, thus implied, the credo became grounded. The finite and the infinite were drawn closer together. At least they ceased to be directly antagonistic. There was the breath of tradition in all this. "Life is a dream", wrote Calderon in a day as much out of joint with faith as our own. Decoud wrote in his note book "All this is life, must be life, since it is so much like a dream". A dreamer not satisfied with his vision until he made it sound, testing it for "truth of a modest sort"—there you have Conrad's hope. "Only in men's imagination does every truth find an effective and undeniable existence", he said, and then, applying this measure of humanity to creative work, "Imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art and life". So would have spoken a Shakespeare rather than a Spencer, a Gissing and not a Dickens, Yeats but not Dunsany. When a man so places himself to reflect upon life, he may be "imprisoned in the house of personal illusion", but he is measuring by a standard as large and fair as any artist can ask, and one hallowed by the use of the truly great:

> All the truth of life is there: a moment of vision, a sigh, a smile—and the return to eternal rest.

So ran the findings of a shy, wistful entertainment of human vagaries, and as a corollary, sympathetic, straightforward:

> The sight of human affairs deserves admiration and pity. . . . He is not insensible who pays them the undemonstrative tribute of a sigh which is not a sob, and of a smile which is not a grin.

The greatest sin that a man can commit against himself is to prove unconscious of his imagination, to ignore its creation of intuitive images, which, interpreted, yield sacred illusions containing a reason for being, the truth of life, the sweet sadness of the passing world, and the heroic austerities of the living picture. There was no room for

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vainglory in a man so working and there was a doorway for growth while life continued; what more could one ask—an existence opening always new vistas, new wisdom, even to the clouding of the very end!

Granting the worth of this credo, what incantation can realize it. How can it be summoned? Is there a clever trick, a simple policy by which, given fortune, strength can seize it as it can wealth or power? That too Conrad answered, deliberately. Renouard in *The Planter of Malata* said:

> No. You don't conquer a wraith, cold mist, stuff of dreams, illusion. It must come to you and cling to your breast. And then! Oh! And then!

Thus it rested upon the lap of the gods in a phrasing that sketched a background of doubt, of chance, but of final ecstasy. It was an aristocratic thing, the illusion, choosing its possessor. Other men have held a similar idea in part; for instance, what to Conrad was an illusion, to McFee is an adumbration. Conrad developed the idea beyond a mere theorem, and when he acknowledged he did not know the origin of illusion, any more than he knew the source of life, he felt free to hint that these two unknowns might be but one and the same mystery, which halts all philosophies.

III

It perchance all began as an idea, an abstraction. A toy for the mind to toss at will into any fortuitous fault in the logic of living! A stop-gap to keep away the wind of cynicism, and let time breed in its place tolerance of life, patience! A man's thought cannot be guessed, let alone weighed with any accuracy. The writing of Conrad was largely autobiographical, and the philosophy of that writing therefore was likely to be both personal and genuine. So much must be granted in the name of sincerity, and to challenge the sincerity of Conrad would be as incredible as to question the universality of death. Throughout the years of production the idea of the power and worth of the gospel of illusion grew upon its author. It passed from being a freely flung expression into a thought couched with the utmost care, stroked lovingly into place as something precious and warm to the heart.

In those later years when even the great grow pen-weary, the credo became a beacon, a landmark to be trusted, a familiar, gallant standard, by which one could be guided toward age and the inevitable end. The empirical phase of it no longer entertained. Its variations were of small moment, patent to Conrad's mind and long since a part of it. As well known as the rig of a ship, or the pace of a daily ridden horse, the arrangement had come to be taken for granted. Life, becoming more and more a thing of retrospect, was, even for Conrad, fast losing its fluid estate. The dome was at length fast clamped upon the luring horizon, and he still passed from familiar headland to familiar headland, with loving craft, but with no thought of forsaking his accustomed track.

Then he came to write a preface in the vein of friendship and in the same breath sounded the note of middle age. Mrs. John Galsworthy had translated Maupassant's *Yvette* splendidly. In these days when even the good must be apologized for to the public by the great, Joseph Conrad, as a friend of long standing, whose services would be in excellent taste, introduced the book. In the course of his preface he wrote:

> In the majority of us who want to be left alone with our ilusions, courage inspires vague alarm.

A confession surely, and flavoured by truth. Illusions had grown in importance. It cannot

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be said that Conrad was here writing in character. He spoke not so in a novel; he reserved it for this intimate bit of work, where the heart, without turning sentimental, approved lustily of the mind's purpose. Was not Mr. Galsworthy almost the first friend Conrad gained among men of letters?

And out of sentiment too, only eight years ago, Conrad again served as a presenter. This time it was memory and not friendship for the author that led him to the task. The memory was that of Stephen Crane, and the author was Thomas Beer, who had done his brilliant best with a subject the chaos of which had kept off men who had known Crane, and who might have fittingly undertaken the book had they had the courage. Recalling their life together in England, Conrad found Crane alluring. Crane triumphant was the thing he sought to see, and that was a difficult mood in which to imagine him. He selected the moment of their meeting, when the only man who called him "Joseph" had ridden down to meet them (Conrad and Mrs. Conrad). Picturing Crane as a dashing figure of a man, happy for the time, he wrote:

> . . . all because he was looking at life from the saddle with a good morning's work behind him. Nothing more is needed to give a man a blessed moment of illusion.

Blessed moment? Was illusion forsaking its disciple? Was the shadow of the fatal year ahead before his eyes? Who can say? Whatever surmise may offer, there need be none about the comfort wrung from illusion. In the full maturity of his power—blessed moment. In one of the latest things he completed, he spoke yet again. He was collecting *Shorter Tales*; not launching new stories, but selecting his favourites from those long finished; so he wrote his own presentation, and made his own apology, and in the midst of it said:

> . . . our very illusions must have a practical meaning. Are they not as characteristic of an individual as his opinions, for instance, or the features of his face?

Not identity with truth, nor with life, he was seeking there, but identity with personality, something akin to oriental "oneness", the East reaching up from his youth, a credo swallowing everything explaining all in the fashion of a philosophy. Would he have come to feel this was too personal to speak of, too much an indiscretion? Death stopped him in full flight—and we have surmise, a dozen or two scattered statements which grow as the man grew, and wonder.

And almost at the end of the preface to *Shorter Tales* he quoted Calderón: "Life is a dream".

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LETTERS FROM GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY

TO CHARLES BATTELL LOOMIS, JR. — CONCLUSION

Beverly, Mch 7, 1913

DEAR BATTELL,—

I have been very happy thinking of you the last three weeks, in the nook you dropped into, and with the warm welcome,—and at night sleeping in that Chamber of Peace; it has been a very tranquil and bright spot in my mind. I have a good many friends who never saw any Chamber of Peace.

I am coming to New York to give an address on March 25, and I thought we would have an hour or two together, and I hope so still. There will be so few hours for us to be together, I fear, and to enjoy our friendship as friends should in the vivid and intimate sense that only comes in presence.

You see we were born so far apart that it is rather a miracle that we got together at all in this time-world, so full of vicissitude as it is. You must fight off the grippe, and all that comes with it,—the lassitude and the oppression. Perhaps it was the approaching shadow of that in me that you felt in my letter. I often have these waves of sadness, but I try to keep them to myself, and I am sorry if I troubled your youth with a mood that belongs to another time of the journey. But in your own case, just get well as soon as possible; and don't think too much about things; just take them as they come for a while. What you feel, if I appreciate it truly, is only the necessary friction of yourself with the world; it will rub up against you, do what you will; the lily-pads are there, and of all varieties,—even to the Lorelei kind,—but they won't pull you down just yet,—do the best you can with all such things, and let it go at that,—and every day begin a new day, and let the dead past care for its own, even though it be but a little while dead.

Always begin anew with the day, just as nature does; it is one of the sensible things that nature does. And take yourself as you were born; your mother bore a very good son, male, and full of vivacity and courage and experiment, and with special ways of his own; don't try to shape yourself too much; let your growing soul shape you; it has its own laws of growth far away from your control; you must trust the sun, and your own blood, and the ways of life that are greater than we are, and have their own issues. A *great faith* must underlie a true man's life,—unfathomable, immeasurable,—and it grows more and more with life, if life is strong and truly grows. Put your faith in life; even though it breaks you, it is the only way to win true bravery and honour. And beside that great faith all these other things,—of convention, of uncertainty and the rest, even the most annoying and discouraging,—sink into their real triviality, things of the moment and the hour and the situation, that soon pass and are nought: it is only *yourself* that stays at last and all the time.

So how easy it is to sermonize,—yes! But today I am moved to write so to you, and take all risks of your mood to me and my moods. I want to help you, but I know how

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hard it is to help anybody at any time,—only I think that the sense that someone else cares always helps because it is the sense of love,—at least I think it is so with you. I am going to attack my speech now, and do you keep along with the lily-pads for a few weeks, be cheerful to your own *désagréments*, write a little, and get well,—that is the first specific for you always. You must have stored up a good stock of health on the farm! And about the 26th keep an hour or two for your affectionate mate in the misery of la grippe, and all other miseries, be they sent thy way.

G. E. W.

Beverly, Apr 16, 1913

Dear Battell,—

I was glad to get a letter from you about things in a sphere where I feel more at home than in your speculations as to man's apotheosis; and I will do my best. It is one of the signs of sense in a man when he begins to discriminate the kinds of knowledge, and knows just what he means by "know". You remember the Oxford rhymes about Jowett—

> . . . I am Jowett,
> What there is to know, I know it:
> I am the Master of this College,
> What I don't know is not knowledge.

That was a clear idea! I remember my surprise when I found out that by "faith" was meant a less degree of knowledge. I always thought, as boy, that "faith" meant "more knowledge". Conviction has nothing to do with knowledge. It may exist without any knowledge at all. It accompanies demonstrated knowledge, usually, as in science; but it may be lacking when the knowledge seems complete and precise. You may have conviction of what you do not know, like the fidelity and honour of a friend; and, in fact, most of our practical beliefs, on which we habitually act, rest on incomplete knowledge and involve faith. Knowledge is of the intellect, and exists either in a concrete state to which there are answering general inductions from facts that are the work of reason and are stored in the mind as abstract knowledge.

I am an agnostic in the sense that I do not believe we have any knowledge except by phenomena external and internal; I may have faith,—a belief,—as to what transcends mortality, but I have no knowledge of it, and the faith itself can only be intelligently stated in symbols, drawn phenomena. To estimate the degree and kind of your knowledge of anything is a necessary thing for a reasoning mind, and induces *clearness* of thought and conviction, and especially it involves a *habit of weighing evidence*, and knowing the widely varying values of evidence, which I regard as a chief good in the intellectual life. The more you train your mind to that, the better off you will be; anybody can be *convinced* of anything,—but it is only the reasoning man, the man who meditates his life, whose convictions are likely to be in the way of truth. Conviction is a good deal like conscience,—not a safe guide,—particularly when it says "yes" to what you want to do. This is a lesson in self-scepticism.

As to words, I have felt that your vocabulary is "journalistic", and lacks taste,—I mean it sacrifices beauty to energy. I do not care to see a man fight, unless he can box: the energy (violence) does not interest me,—only the beauty, the clear art of it, interests me. But of late Kipling first and others lately have so degraded our vocabulary that vulgarity of diction (as I think it) has become the fashion, and I cannot blame you for falling in with the popular and accredited way of success; but I do not believe that such dic-

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tion will survive in literature,—like dialect, it will kill anything written in it. Shocking words and phrases are as much to be debarred as shocking acts or gestures; and they disappear as one grows in taste. You like them, I think, because of the sense of freedom of speech they give you, and also of their imaginative freshness; it is the blow they give to convention that charms you; and in part, they are something like the noises a boy makes,—mere exuberance and explosion of the cerebral tissue. But your natural vocabulary, whatever it be, is rather a thing to tame than to kill. This is a lesson in behaviour.

As to biography,—it is a rare biography that is good, and I don't think of any for you. Men of action, I should say, and men whose actions you like—like Gordon, perhaps. You are hardly old enough in the game to read biography for its diabolic interest,—namely to see how the other fellow got through with it,—an unfailing interest; and most biographies are too full of gossip to interest you,—too much detail. As to works on light, etc., the world is fuller of them than of anything else just now; the old *International Series of Science* (Appleton) was excellent; but old-fashioned now, I suppose; but of good brief manuals on all phases of science there are thousands. Go to the Library, and look under the Subject Index at "Light", "Optics", etc.—you will find them plenty as daisies. I read many such books years ago—*primers* of this and that, and with great profit. This is a lesson in how to use indexes, mainly.

But best of all is your suggestion that you are a bit monotonous in your mind (I said as much in my last letter), and you must have a change from that world of man and the self that is all given (it seems so) and easily studied in one's own personality; true, there is a lot there, but it needs the agency of life in others and in the object, to bring it out with value. To mix reality in your brew will be excellent for the body and flavour of it,—especially the body: and nothing will do more to keep you out of that miasma of "hysteria and mania" that too often in one or another form infect, if they do not master, the man whose brain is mostly "subjectivity".

Once more, all hail,—and forgive me!—Love to you!

G. E. W.

Beverly, Nov. 22, 1915

Dear Battell,—

I am slowly picking up the threads again, and I can't remember whether I ever thanked you for the verses you wrote to me. They were precious to me for many reasons. I was pretty ill at Capri, for the first time in my life, and I am still not quite right. I came home in June, to Boston, having bid my Italian friends off to the war,—and all summer I was rather miserable, but began to get my hands on the reins again in October, and now I feel very much stronger and like my old self; it has been a long pull to land, but I think I'll get on now for a while. Naturally I have done no work for a year, and more, but last month I did a little notice of Rupert Brooke's poetry, in whom some of my friends as well as I took a warm interest, and I rejoice to see that the book is succeeding here. And I wrote a sonnet which I enclose, sorry that it isn't better. Next week I hope to begin real work, a little every day, and so come gradually to my oats. The most striking change in me is that I don't smoke. The habit left me in January as easily as the birds depart when summer is over. Strangely, too; for you remember I was an inveterate smoker. It seems uncanny,—especially as it just "happened" without effort or advice. I

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was glad you wrote me, too, about the sonnets. I found them in my desk on my return home, and thought they ought not to stay silent just because I was "lame of a wing".

The war has affected me a good deal,—mostly to tears. I feel keenly our own indifference to the lives of our fellow citizens who have been killed at sea, and the loss of our prestige as a nation abroad; we seem to be making money and thinking little of the other great things at stake, even our own credit as a nation charged with caring for its own people. But these things make me "wild"; I love peace, but I love other things more than life or comfort—and that is what many people mean by "peace". And anyway too many of my friends are "on the firing line" to let me think much of times of peace and its ways. There are people who are too proud *not* to fight,—and I sometimes sympathize with them. It is a good kind of pride. Well, we are not to fight, you and I, at least, but to be friends for many a day yet, I trust. And I hope the "boy" prospers daily and nightly, and that all goes well with the family,—and I am writing this to be in time to wish you a happy Thanksgiving. Life has many changes, and I have no doubt yours are good for you. I wanted you to be married early in life, and am glad for you as I am for all my friends who tread the rosy path with joyful feet; and your verse, and your visions will come back to you;—perhaps not the same visions, but happier and truer ones, and you will begin realizing them right away with your wife and the children and your daily labour and good thinking at odd times. I hope so, and pray heaven to bless you in your ways, and be kind to you all.

This is a longer letter than I meant,—because I am really none too strong for such things,—but I have room still for sending you my love; and hope and courage and patience be always yours!

Affectionately,

G. E. W.

Beverly, Dec. 19, 1928

Dear Battell,—

It was a letter to make any man young; and if I had had the natural concomitant of youth—i.e., absolute poverty,—you doubtless would have taken in what remained of me, at your seaside door, some weeks ago, after a stowaway trip on a freighter; but, only near-poverty being my angel, it was another story; and I only, like a fool, sucked my thumbs, stayed put, and envied you. You were a "dear boy" to me,—but how ever did your charms, great as they were, get the better of your "boss" in so many score callings? Dear me! it is stiffer than miracles! The jumping was not so bad—but how were the landings?

Long and long I've wondered about you, these many years. It is not unusual for a friend of mine to turn out a wanderer; late in life one must find some ships down the horizon; and your dipping into my little circle of blue sky out of the void was an event. And I like your story. You know how I liked you; and the story fits the boy,—the voyage on the dipping jib, and the quick action on the loan from Providence, and the cottage by the sea (I suppose it is a cottage) with the family on both sides dropping in and the honest welcome for your old companion of a dog still astray in the world,—sure this is the true poet-boy of the dawn, who sat on the rocks with me in the flesh one happy hour, and heaven made us friends for life,—whether we met or not,—and here is the call after many a year,—and the old "Adsum". I love the story. It's a story after my own heart and the poetry chimes with the picture,—interesting even when

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"scrappy" after the modern style; the moral epigram, the "Be" kind, rather too much like Goethe, the wiseacre,—but *To Winifred,* that's mine,—*fine,* I say, dear boy still, *fine;* it's beyond words, one of those poems one can't say anything about,—but you just take it in by *feeling it, living it,* as it were,—*fine,* and if nobody ever knows it but me, what matter? Once, I heard you *sing.* I've only one letter of yours, of the old bundle, and it would be of no use for your mythical prize, so I'll keep it. I can't write the old letters now; it *tires* me, and takes too long, and wastes the sunlight; but I can respond still to a kind word,—the *living* and *writing* will have to be yours, and for me the happiness of your touch far away. I am apparently wholly well, and look about the same—only the years have their way; why not?

I am glad you have your children and your wife. There's no better fortune for you than that,—and great may your happiness together be! I send them a "Merry Christmas" from my heart,—to "the boys" and "the girl", and to you, and your wife,—Merry be your Christmas, and bright your New Year! I have dozens of friends up and down the coast,—but my wandering days are gone by, I fancy. I have many friends, but I seldom *see* one, very seldom. So remember me, and I'll always prize a word (and if I don't answer, don't worry,—it will be all right). Keep on your way, good and strong; and bright be your stars ahead, many and many a year! "'Courage,'" he said, "and pointed to the land."

Affectionately,

G. E. W.

HERE'S A PLOT FOR YOU

by Margaret E. Sangster

I CAME late to the bridge party—and gave, as my excuse (legitimately, too) a business appointment that hadn't jelled. As I settled into my chair at one of the tables, my partner leaned forward.

"So you're in business," she said. "How interesting! None of us"—the gesture of her slender hand included the other women at the table—"has ever worked! Just what do you do?"

I put my cards methodically in order.

"Why," I told my partner, "I write."

One of the other women turned to me. The fixed look in her eyes reminded me a bit of an early bird who has glimpsed an equally early worm.

"Write?" she questioned. "Write *what?* Do you mean you're an *author*?"

I laughed. My cards were really excellent.

"Guilty!" I acknowledged. "I am, in a way, an author. I write stories —"

"For the magazines?" breathed my partner.

"Well—with luck . . ." I told her.

A woman, who as yet had not spoken, laid down her cards. She laid them, face up, upon the table's embroidered linen cover.

"I", she said firmly, "have always wanted to write. Only I haven't the time, not really.

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I have a duplex apartment—fourteen rooms. I'm so busy, you wouldn't guess, just running my house! But I've always thought I could write. The oddest things happen to me—they'd make the best stories, I always tell my husband. Maybe you could make stories out of some of the things that happen —"

My partner was interrupting. A high red spot burned on each of her carefully facialled cheeks.

"Just on the way down here, to this party", she said, "I had the strangest experience! It ought to make a wonderful plot for a story. Just as I was getting into my taxi . . . *do you want me to tell you about it*?"

I didn't. I wanted to play bridge. But I come (so I've been assured) of a line of gentlewomen.

"I'd be so interested," I murmured; and laid my hundred aces, also face up, upon the table. . . .

It is amazing how many people feel that they have story plots that are sure to charm the wily author's ear. Not only to charm the author's ear—but to give the author a lasting and permanent place in the Hall of Fame. The mere cry of "author" brings forward a veritable avalanche of ideas from every conceivable corner of any room. A man will take almost any lady author into a conservatory that is sweet with a scent of jasmine, and—to the accompaniment of a far-off waltz—will give her, verbally, a plot that he thinks should develop into a best seller.

"It happened to me at a board meeting," he'll say, "just yesterday. I couldn't help thinking what a story it would make. I bet you could even sell it to the movies!"

Your lady author, especially if she's a married lady author and has been trained to listen, will hear the plot out in the politest possible way. And then she'll murmur:

"It's just perfectly wonderful. Some day I'll surely write it!"

Then she'll dash from the conservatory and the scent of jasmine, with the firm conviction in her mind that if she ever has a child that child will be brought up to be either a milliner or a mechanic, according to sex.

Story plots happen to everybody, if you'll believe the evidence of your ears. There isn't a soul in the world who leads a completely uneventful life. The long arm of coincidence reaches out to embrace Third Avenue and Park Avenue alike. Everybody has at one time or another felt a premonition, or listened in on a séance, or just missed being in a train wreck, or met the friend of a lost childhood in some little Parisian restaurant.

"I got into a taxi today" (here I am, going back to my partner at the bridge table!) "and as I got in, I looked at the picture of the driver. I always do, you know—it gives me a sort of feeling of safety to know what kind of a man's driving me. And do you know, the face of that driver looked kind of familiar. And when I read the name, what do you think! It was the name of my cook's cousin. He'd done work for us once, years ago—and though I'd almost forgotten his face, I'd always remember his queer Swedish name. I tapped on the window and told him who I was, and he was so thrilled."

And that's what I laid down a hundred aces to hear—just a great, big, beautiful plot!

There's the girl who has just had a wisdom tooth pulled, and who dreamed the strangest thing when she was coming out of the gas. It just seemed as if she were being pursued through endless forests by a man in a long black robe. "And do you know, the man's face wasn't a man's face at all—it was Aunt Emma's face! And Aunt Emma is very

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ill, just now—I've just had a letter from Cousin Jane telling me about her illness. I can't help feeling that my dream means that something—*drastic*—is going to happen to Aunt Emma. And seems to me that the dream would make a fine opening for a mystery story—you know, one of the psychic kind!"

Or, over the tea table, this—from the stout lady in black chiffon:

"They tell me you write stories. You *do*? Then maybe you'd be interested in this. It happened last night, when my husband and I were sitting at dinner. A sort of silence fell over the room, all at once, and we looked at each other, and my husband said, for no reason:

"'Have you heard from Tom Smith lately?' (Tom Smith's a man we used to know long ago. He was our best man when we were married, you see.)

"And just as my husband mentioned Tom's name, I was going to ask my husband if he'd heard from Tom Smith. What do you make of that—that's queer, isn't it? I'm sure we're going to have some sort of a message from Tom, any moment."

Most of the plots that people tell you have to do with coincidence. Meeting somebody, or having a letter from somebody, forms the basis of the average so-called fiction idea that springs, full armoured, from the lay mind.

But there are some people who draw upon their experiences in the far places of the world. Places which you haven't visited—and which they know you haven't visited. This is typical:

"The worst fright I ever had happened in an army post, just outside of a town" (with an unpronounceable name and in, we'll say, Chile) "I was sitting all alone—my husband had been called out, you know, on some sort of military duty—and suddenly I heard a shot in the cactus. And I just sat frozen with terror and waited until he got home. And I was praying, too, because I was just a bride, and I didn't speak Spanish, or anything. And when my husband came in, finally, and I told him about the shot, he went out and looked in the cactus. And what do you think he found? He found a dead rattlesnake lying there. Somebody must have shot at it, as they went by. This may sound tame to you —*you've never been in Chile*. But I can't describe to you the way I felt while I waited for my husband. For all I knew it might have been a native uprising, and I was all alone . . ."

That sort of plot as it is told, assumes all the local colour—believe it or not—of an army post in a tropical land. You have to listen to interminable detail about the flora and fauna of the country. And I might add that the discovery of the dead rattlesnake brings to you an intense feeling of relief, also —but for a different reason. You weren't afraid of a native uprising. . . .

Anyway, make a story up out of it if you can. I can't.

A good many plots come to me through the mail. And some of them are nice plots, too, in a way. But your average author hears so many grim tales of plagiarism that he actually fears to consider a plot that is sent him by an unknown friend—or a known one, for that matter. However, because I write a certain type of friendly, chatty article, I'm sometimes able to base one of these articles upon a letter from a correspondent. When I do this, however, I always quote directly from the letter, giving due credit where the credit belongs.

For instance, this type of plot, which isn't a plot at all, is extremely usable. In fact, I have used it. It came to me from a woman

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who lived in a little town somewhere in the South—and she wrote about something that had happened in the vicinity of her home.

"They've torn down the old church", she wrote, "that has stood for so many years in our village. And the bell that used to toll in the steeple of the church, is now lying beside the road—discarded, and growing rusty with the rains and suns. As I see it lying there, I can't help thinking of what its voice has meant to this community. It has pealed so joyously on many a wedding day, it has so often tolled a story of death. It has called young and old to worship, and has sent them home strengthened and sustained. . . . Perhaps sometime you can say something in one of your articles about the bell."

This sort of an idea can be used. I don't have to tell you how. And it is gratefully accepted by this author.

Speaking of plagiarism, a curious case came to me once through the use of a plot that was given to me free, gratis, by an old circus clown. I won't go into the details of the plot, but it had to do with an incident of circus life in which the clown, himself, had played a part. It seemed fool-proof, for it was dramatic and it was also one of the few plots that are not intensely personal, as are most of the plots that eager helpers give to an author. Perhaps it was because of the circus background that it assumed for me such a curiously romantic appeal. At any rate, being newer to the game than I am now, I wrote the story and sent it to a magazine, which bought it. The editor of the magazine published the story, in a year or so. And, in due time after its publication, he received a letter from another author who claimed to have written the same story. His story, he told my editor, was published prior to my own—but my editor, checking back, found that he'd had my story on his desk fully four months before the other author's story was published. And so an unpleasant matter was promptly quashed, although it remained a mystery. For the two stories, when compared, featured the same plot.

Years later I met the aggrieved author, and we got together on the matter. And I learned that he also had come by the story honestly—even more honestly than I. He, like the clown, had seen the incident happen. For he, at the time, had been writing publicity for the same circus.

I give this incident to show that plots, unless you see them happen yourself, or unless they are born in your own brain, aren't good medicine—not to take personally!

Many an otherwise truthful person will tell with great gusto and as a personal experience something that he has read. It's a human trait that's hard (or, on second thought, not so hard, after all) to understand. We all of us like to have the center of the stage at one time or another—and being the hero or heroine of an adventure gives us a certain degree of spotlight! Many an author has been led astray by writing somebody's personal experiences that really weren't personal experiences, at all—and by discovering, on the eve of publication, that somebody like Poe or Irvin S. Cobb or Edgar Wallace had done it, not only better than he, but a good many years previously. That's the greatest danger—from a court of law standpoint—of accepting plots from a friend. Better to accept jewelry and fur coats, and get yourself misunderstood in a more concrete way.

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ESSAYS IN GRAMMAR

VI. WHO ARE THE BEST WRITERS?

by Janet Rankin Aiken

It is a change in grammatical theory which has made the question in the title a poignant one in the mind of the theorist in the field of the English language. In the very old days the English grammarian had things pretty much all his own way. His doctrine of correct speech did not depend on any "best writers", however well regarded by the general public. Based as it was squarely upon the rules of a dead and therefore a fixed language, namely Latin, this doctrine could also be rounded and unchanging. The very old grammarian could be an autocrat, benevolent indeed to those who trembled, but terrible toward any who evaded or transgressed his Latinized plan of the English language.

Little by little people, even grammarians, came to realize that English was not a fixed and finished product, but a changing and growing organism. They realized that Latin with all its charms could not be considered quite adequate to express the spirit of English. And a new theory of linguistic purity began to take shape.

A grammarian named Noble Butler, who in 1874 published his *Practical and Critical Grammar of the English Language*, put the thing fairly neatly in the preface, where he said that "Words and forms which have been established by the usage of the great writers should be regarded as among the elements of the language".

Possibly Butler's statement is a little over-enthusiastic, as we shall see shortly; but still the words have the modern ring. They carry conviction to the modern mind, which is strongly inclined to worry less and less over rules and to allow in English whatever can get itself adopted by reputable writers. At least Butler's principle gives us a definite standard upon which to work, and thus it is calculated to evoke applause from both those who know grammar and those who don't. We can all understand usage even if we have never studied Latin.

We can all stand with Butler long enough to ask the next and obvious question, who are these great writers whose usage is to form the standard of correctness? Taking three centuries as the spread of Modern English, perhaps we may begin with Shakespeare and the King James Bible and come down to the present *via* Milton, Pope, Johnson, Wordsworth, Scott, Dickens, Kipling, and Shaw, to name a few more or less at random. If these are not the "great writers" of English, who are?

The question is never answered in so many words in the *Practical and Critical Grammar*, but reading this worthy volume through, we are forced to admit, however regretfully, that Butler could not have had these models in mind when he wrote that sentence in his preface. He does not really wish us to mould our English after that of Shakespeare, the Bible, or any of the others I have mentioned. Indeed, at the end of our study of his book, we are forced to the

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peculiar and somewhat disconcerting conclusion that by "great writers" Noble Butler must mean almost exclusively Noble Butler. Certainly he cannot mean Shakespeare. Shakespeare could force an actor to say "Thou and I am one". He could speak of the "most unkindest cut". In what is probably his most quoted soliloquy the words "must give us pause", having only the doubtfullest of subjects, would certainly suffer correction at the hands of any living grammar teacher. Books have been, and more could be, compiled about the liberties Shakespeare took with the grammar of English. Modern authorities could never give Will a passing grade, much less make him a model for the rest of us.

And the King James Bible too contains dozens of what Noble Butler lists as errors, some of which I have mentioned in previous articles in this series. Every day or two I must correct students who say "That little stream has flown along"; but Job can say "Whose foundation was overflown with a flood". I tell students not to use two subjects with a singular verb, but James can write "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing". Regretfully we must admit that the Bible is no certain candidate for the "great writers" group.

Time and space would fail me if I started the job of checking up on Milton, Pope, Johnson, and the others I mentioned as possibly great. And anyhow it is not necessary, because this job has been done so often. Pick up the second volume of Jespersen's *Modern English Grammar*, to name only one such compilation, and you will find examples from all these worthies enough to make a grammarian's hair curl.

Not one of the classic writers of English measures up to the grammarian's standard in his writing. It is pitifully easy to catch Milton nodding, or to find the Great Panjandrum out. Not a single one of the so-called great authors of English literature chose to make, or perhaps was able to make, his language free from grammatical errors.

So easy and exhilarating is it to snoop out grammatical slips in whatever specimen one chooses to select that boner-hunts have become a favourite sport of the modern linguist. They are appearing not only in learned but in popular form. The latest to be submitted for approval is a tiny volume, *Cruelty to Words*, by Ernest Weekley, published by Dutton at one dollar. In this book the author gives several classic or stock examples of funny English, and more hitherto unquoted ones from newspapers, magazines, and novels, including many popular shockers. He gives slips of all the fashionable varieties from the "one-of" mistake ("one of the best books that has appeared") to the split infinitive.

It is perhaps fortunate that Mr. Weekley made his book short. He says that he has been on his boner-hunt for many years, and if he has half an eye he must by now have collected examples enough to fill an encyclopedia. But cleverly he has given just enough instances to impress and not enough to discourage the reader, who might easily feel, after reading a really exhaustive list, that there is no use trying to make one's own English good and pure when all the best-sellers are making theirs bad.

But when the last boner-hunt is over and the latest author convicted of deadly sin against his mother tongue, what becomes of the "usage" standard so neatly formulated by Noble Butler in 1874? Can we really entrust our language to these guides who have been shown to be so fallible? Shall we begin to say *overflown* with Job and *to slowly trace* with Byron? Does the usage standard mean that we may begin taking the same liberties

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with English which Shakespeare took? Or shall we set up yet another standard for good English?

In *Cruelty to Words* Mr. Weekley gives his answer, and though he does not discuss any possible standard but his own, his formulation is encouraging to those who consider that English instruction should have more regard to the spirit even at the expense of some of the emphasis heretofore placed upon the letter. Mr. Weekley advocates neither a return to the Latin plan for English nor an adherence to usage as a criterion. He says "If the first duty of the writer is to make himself clear, the second is to avoid unpleasing clumsiness". And as these are the only two duties he mentions, one may perhaps assume that he thinks those are all there are. Clarity and simplicity combine to form this linguist's ideal. On the whole this standard of Mr. Weekley's hits fairly close to the heart of the matter. At least it permits us still to consider Shakespeare a good writer and the Authorized Version good English. It justifies Milton and Pope if not Johnson, whose writing is under a cloud at present anyhow. Kipling, Shaw, Dickens, and Scott all come well within the pale.

I am not just sure that Mr. Weekley himself quite does. In his book he aims at a popular style, which is fairly clear but too often clumsy. I would rather write "the least worn of the two" (one of the boners quoted) than this: "Apart from such pleonasms as are sanctified by long usage, and even these should be used sparingly, a pleonastic statement is as objectionable as one that is left incomplete". Why sanctified? And what is long usage if not merely usage? And what is the construction of the apart-phrase or the these-clause in that sentence? Parentheses might have helped.

However, it is better to know what should be done in English than neither to know nor to practise good writing. And anyhow, the standard of clarity and simplicity is good, because, as I said, it has to do with the spirit rather than the letter. It judges the effect of what one writes rather than merely the words one uses.

One might add to Mr. Weekley's enumeration. There is the elementary necessity of having an idea before beginning to write at all. Too many writers, elementary and advanced, neglect this necessity. There is the essential quality of friendliness, or the ability to get on good terms with the reader. If I were writing a manual on the writer's art I should list this quality as of the very first importance. And then after all the other essentials have been listed, there is always the final essential quality of genius to make words live and last.

How will the ideal grammar, the grammar of the future, handle these matters? It will of course still teach us how to analyze sentences and distinguish the various elements of speech, the parts of the pattern of the English sentence. But when it comes to the consideration of corrective English, will it haggle over split infinitives, agreement of verb with subject, and all the other stock-in-trade of the English teacher? I hope not. I hope that in time these things may take their proper places as subordinate to the principles of clarity, simplicity, and the rest of the laws whose observance has given us the writers of great English.

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A MONTH OF THE THEATRE

OUR COSMOPOLITAN STAGE

by Francis Fergusson

THE THEATRE GUILD'S fifth production, whatever its shortcomings, provides an absorbing and puzzling evening's entertainment. *The Moon in the Yellow River* is a play by Mr. Denis Johnston, a Dublin lawyer, about contemporary Ireland, its spiritual and political anarchy, its sceptical Catholic sophistication, its fondness for drink, and its sentimentality. In some ways it resembles the work of Liam O'Flaherty or Sean O'Casey: whose *Mr. Gilhooley* and *The Plow and the Stars* appeared here recently. There seems to be a school of Irish writers at this moment as distinct as the pre-war Russians, and even more gloomy.

The story is about Dobelle, an Irish engineer too disillusioned to act (Claude Rains); a German engineer named Tausch, whom the State has hired to build a new powerhouse (Egon Brecher); and Darrell Blake, a spectacular, loud young anarchist who hates modern industry and modern progress and plots to blow up Herr Tausch's works (Henry Hull). Tausch, with his courage and his practical intelligence and his faith in science and progress can't understand the backward Irish, and Dobelle, for all his comprehension of both Tausch and Ireland, can't explain them to each other, nor convince Tausch that his labours are bound to fail. Blake frankly announces that he is going to dynamite the works; Tausch calls up the State police; and throughout the second act Tausch and Blake expound their antagonistic philosophies to each other while waiting, respectively, for the police and the explosives. At the end of the act, when the police come and hear the story, their commandant murders Blake in cold blood, and poor old Tausch is even more horrified than he was at the prospect of having his work destroyed. In the last act, Herr Tausch tries in vain to understand the murderer, who has a well-reasoned apologia ready; one of Blake's followers dynamites the works anyway; Dobelle is reduced to quoting the *Inferno* and Thomas Aquinas. At the end Dobelle turns to his daughter, whom he has neglected since her birth, for a sort of weepy comfort and communion. There are many well-observed minor characters, notably Aunt Colomba (Dobelle's sister) and Willie, one of Blake's followers, a gun-flourishing yokel who knows only that he is "agin the government" and afraid of his mother.

This curious play is unskilfully written and full of self-pity. Yet its sincerity merits attention, at least until the too-apocalyptic finale. It is interesting also because it confirms other impressions of Ireland, and so has a sort of reportorial or news value. It has also a quality which is I suppose what commended it to the Guild: it is brightly argumentative, debating industry versus agriculture, progress versus philosophical anarchy, and so on. But it is less smug than the usual Guild "ideologic" repartee because its characters are more shrewdly and honestly drawn, so that the ideas take some meaning from

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the characters' excited espousal of them. It has received a good Guild production and has, accordingly, been well cast for "type". Mr. Egon Brecher as the idealistic German engineer has some good moments, especially when he is being kind, or when he is being snappy and efficient. He is always difficult to understand in his long speeches because he swallows the ends of his sentences. Mr. Rains's weary Irish engineer is good when he leaves much to the imagination, but becomes rather bathetic in the highly emotional scenes, for which, however, the author is mostly to blame. Mr. Henry Hull makes a fine dashing sinister young anarchist, and Mr. Barry Macollum is a pleasantly comical Willie.

Blessed Event

Our own social disorder is on a more childish level, as you may see by the new comedy-melodrama, *Blessed Event*. It shows the rise to fame and fortune of one of those ravenous gossip-scavengers who run the chit-chat columns of the tabloids. Like *Broadway* and *Front Page* it is a swift, ironic glimpse of one of the strenuous public professions, with gaudy paper effigies for characters. Its most "human" feelings are as conventional as the sob stuff at the Palace; yet, like its predecessors, it seems to share and demonstrate a certain hectic current life. Alvin Roberts, the hero-columnist, goes just a bit too far in one of his stories, and ruins the career of a dancer by reporting she is about to have a baby. He gets into difficulties with the big racketeer who seduced her, and is almost murdered by his thugs. We are shown a long line of the types that fawn on such a figure: the society woman who wants him to embellish her salon; the keepers of night-clubs who want his patronage; the editors of newspapers who want the circulation his column brings. Alvin himself, as played by Mr. Roger Pryor, is the best sketch in the gallery. Mr. Pryor manages to look as sleek, tawdry, and bumptious as any of the swift creatures that haunt the West Forties. Bluffed and stampeded by the prevailing rackets, Mr. Pryor's Alvin becomes the bitterest bluffer of them all.

Plays of this kind, which I believe is a genuinely New York kind, are much too shrewd for themselves. On the one hand their fables are probable enough (at least until the sweet final clinch); and the personages, in their insane shallowness, in their mechanically-patterned patter, exhibit a restless activity which is almost life. Yet nobody, not even the artists who produce them, has the perspective to wonder what "it's all about". Seen through adult eyes, these fables would be startling; lacking that changed perspective they are no more dismaying than Times Square itself.

Face the Music

It is just this changed perspective on the materials of Broadway farce which Mr. George Kaufman and his collaborators have been trying to effect. In *Once in a Lifetime* it was the movies they used for material, in *Of Thee I Sing*, it is national politics, and in this new musical comedy by Irving Berlin and Moss Hart—which I connect with Mr. Kaufman because he staged it and because it is in his line—it is things in general, things like the depression and the Seabury investigation. The extremely informal story is about a millionaire policeman, Martin Van Buren Meshbesher (Hugh O'Connell) who, with his wife (Mary Boland), wants to back a show to get rid of the money in his little tin box, and so escape the investigation. The show he backs fails, and very amusingly. After that there are too many charmingly fantastic complications for me to describe; but I may

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say that it all ends very happily when they decide to stage the Seabury investigation like a musical comedy (a sure hit predicted for both) and Mary Boland comes riding in on a Ziegfeld elephant to offer her testimony. It makes an excellent show, humorously bawdy, and nearly as good as *Of Thee I Sing*. It is full of fertile ideas, whch I hope someone will imitate and develop. Among the best ideas was giving Miss Boland a chance at musical comedy, where her talent for fantastic farce gets full scope, and bringing Mr. O'Connell back in a part as good for him as the nut-eater of *Once in a Lifetime*.

There's Always Juliet

It would be a nice problem to define exactly how modern English comedies differ from each other and from representative American varieties. We have plenty of samples every year—from Mr. Coward, or Mr. Milne, or Mr. Drinkwater, or Mr. Benn W. Levy, or Mr. Van Druten, who now gives us *There's Always Juliet*. In general the Englishmen speak up more crisply and firmly, with a more assured sense of their place in society, and a better eye to flattering their audience, than the Americans. The English of our stages, with their butlers and aunts and neighbours and vicars, are much more one big family than we are. And on this side the family theatre patronage goes to them. At their plays you may see the papas and mammas, with their more or less discontented sons and daughters, riding up in family limousines from comfortable apartments. For *There's Always Juliet* the scene of this reunion is the pleasant, pompous old Empire Theatre, which is exactly appropriate.

The play, which is in spirit closer to a Drinkwater comedy than to any other current British fun, is about an American in London who falls in love with an English girl at first sight and, after three acts of mild-mannered love-making, persuades her to marry him and go back to Park Avenue. Besides the lovers and a telephone, there are only two characters, the maid, Florence, and Peter Walmsley, a young Briton of the calf-like, bleating sort—a kind of sedentary heir of the thick-witted country-cousins of the Restoration stage. The maid is played with unobtrusive skill by Dame May Whitty, a Commander of the Order of the British Empire; and Walmsley is amusingly done by Mr. Cyril Raymond. But for most of the evening the stage is occupied only by Mr. Herbert Marshall and his wife, Miss Edna Best. It was evidently the author's notion to leave the audience entirely at the mercy of their charm. But from this situation they get off remarkably well. They are a less impetuous team than the Lunts, and a more refined one than the Ellises. Mr. Marshall tactfully adopts a few Americanisms without trying to alter his personality much, and Miss Best, who was last seen in the sophisticated Bernstein *Mélo*, suggests London girlishness without half trying.

Browning showed the relation between husband and wife as "supremely worth while" says Henry James, but asks, "worth while for them, or for us?"—"For us," he answers, "in this noble exercise of our imagination." Mr. Van Druten exercises his imagination very little. If you find his play worth while it must be because of the Marshalls.

Thriller

The perfect thriller would be a play with nothing but an exciting plot, the perpetual motion of a succession of hair-raising incidents, never the effort to make the characters credible or sympathetic, or the story "significant"—and then, mercifully and unexpectedly, the happy issue and the brief, per-

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functory clinch. The pleasure to be got from thrillers is in the unravelling of their trick machinery, and in surrendering to their bold make-believe. When they become unendurable it is usually because the movement of the plot stops, and we are left in the company of their silly characters. *Whistling in the Dark* offends as little as possible in this respect; it is my nomination for the Season's best. It tells how a gang of thugs captures an author of detective stories and his best girl and holds the pair until the author plans them a perfect murder; and of how the author plans it, and yet foils the villains and escapes in spite of all. Mr. Ernest Truex is right in his element as the author. He has the happy knack of being exciting without taking it all too seriously. As for the thugs, they are sufficiently tough and heartless, especially the two played by Mr. Edward Arnold and Mr. Jack Stone. And Mr. Oenslager has designed the portentously sinister setting which was called for by the piece.

Escudero

Vicente Escudero is the Spanish Gypsy dancer who is said to be known in Europe, but who is new to our stage this season. He is assisted by a pianist, a guitarist, and two other dancers, Carmita and Carmela. He has the well-drilled formality and the rich gusto of folk-dancing more than any dancer I know —more, certainly, than the joyous Argentina, his compatriot. His dancing is so simple that it becomes mysterious: he uses very few movements and poses, usually he tells no story, or at most the merest sketch of a flirtation or a quarrel; but he performs them with such absorbed, concentrated power that they become, at their intensest, ritualistic. His stamping on the stage, his quick turns and struttings, suggest the dances of grouse at mating time. When he stops stock-still, in a toreador's pose, he is like one of those elegant Cretan figurines of athletes vaulting over the backs of charging bulls. He performs against a plain canvas backdrop, half white, half sky-blue, and his excellent costuming is like some of Picasso's designs for the stage—Spanish, yet with a suggestion of many other kinds and ages of Mediterranean peasantry. The two other dancers are excellent too, they catch his spirit when they all dance together, and one of them (Carmela, if she is the taller) does an especially beautiful solo dance in a light-blue dress all made of ruffles.

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ABOUT BOOK-COLLECTING

by Wilfred Partington

A William Blake Discovery and Its Lesson

London, February.

A YOUNG MAN was setting off to London to start there a second-hand bookshop. His old father—a provincial bookseller—gave him the parting advice: "Don't forget, my boy. Never buy or sell a book in a poke". The antiquarian's version of the old proverb is equally applicable in the case of the collector. Amplified it would be "don't buy or sell a book without carefully examining and (if important enough) collating it. This End-Paper illustrates the advice.

Mr. John Castle, a London specialist in rare books and manuscripts, one recent morning received a report as follows: "Smith's *Nollekens and His Times*. 2 vols. bds., slightly foxed. 1828". Mr. Castle had long been wanting a first edition in the original state of this justly esteemed biography of the famous sculptor. The price asked for it did not excite his optimism; the warning "slightly foxed" was enough to put him off the scent. To be brief, he could hardly bring himself to believe that this first edition of the wanted book was in the condition he desired. For a week the report remained unanswered. Then he came across it again. Oh, well, he would send for it! At the worst its return only involved the trouble of packing and postages.

The two volumes duly arrived. Their original boards were unexpectedly clean; their backs good; and a hasty glance showed a remarkably "fresh" copy, the fox-marks being so slight as to be almost negligible. Mr. Castle was pleased, but not excited; and he was putting the books on his shelf when he instinctively applied the good old bookseller's rule. The item was then carefully examined page by page. Volume I was complete—and that was all. But the seller, even if he had carefully looked at the first volume, had not gone far enough. Volume II contained the surprises. There between its original boards was literary treasure trove. To begin with, the reverse of the title-page contained the inscription in ink: "Elizth Hogarth West Drayton". Next, opposite page 73—on which Dr. Johnson's name is recorded in the list of works by the sculptor, with the foot-note anecdote of Chantry—was found inserted a holograph letter from Nollekens to the Reverend Mr. Crowe, Buckingham, Bucks, referring to his busts of Johnson and Sterne. This holograph letter, by the way, recalls Dr. Johnson's characteristic tribute, as recorded by John Thomas

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Smith: "Well, Sir! I think my friend Joe Nollekens can chop out a head with any of them". The concluding section of Smith's book consists of the last of his biographical sketches—that important one of William Blake. On page 472 of this surprising copy was the marginal annotation in script:

Fuselli said to Flaxman "By gare Flaxman all that we do know we have acquired from Mishter Blake".

The turning of the leaf revealed on page 474 another annotation, this time initialled, as follows:

For Sir Thomas Lawrence, Blake made two Drawings—one of the Wise and Foolish Virgins —the other Shadrach and his companions coming from the Fiery furnace—for which Lawrence paid him Twenty five guineas each—J.H.

But the greatest discovery of all was reserved for "The End", for beginning with page 487 and continuing over the margin of the last page and onto the blank leaf were these annotations with their sidelights:

Fred Tatham was Blake's executor and possessed several of his drawings, many of which I purchased from him. Mrs. Blake was hardly the passive creture here described—at all events Tatham did not find her so for she was opposed to everything he did for her benefit and when she submitted to his views it was always with the words she "Had no help for it"—that at last Tatham tired with her opposition threw the Will behind the fire and burnt it saying There now you can do as you like for the Will no longer exists and left her. Early the following morning she called upon him saying William had been with her all night and required her to come to him and renew the Will which was done and never after did she offer any objection to Tatham's proceedings
Frederick Tatham was the son of an Architect at Winchester whose daughter married George Richmond B A—and like his Brother in Law he became a Portrait painter in water colours—but attaching himself to the Irvingites he first became an Itinerent preacher usually holding forth in the Regents Park—now I believe he has entirely forsaken the Arts and is employed exclusively by that Sect—J. H. 1877

Some researches of mine show the biographical interest of these annotations. The first one gives in actual words the tribute to William Blake of Fuselli, which Gilchrist's *Life* of that artist amply substantiates. The second annotation gives variant details concerning the drawings done for Lawrence by Blake. But these are of minor significance compared with the last and longest annotation. Frederick Tatham was not only the faithful friend of Blake and his executor; but the writer of a *Life* of him. The manuscript of this *Life* he bound up with his coloured copy of Blake's *Jerusalem*—and there it remained unpublished until 1906. First-hand and valuable as is that *Life*, it is short and marred by false sentiment. The truth is that Tatham was an artist and good friend to the greater artist; but he was no biographer. His true knowledge of the Blakes was largely withheld on sentimental and religious grounds. But here in this manuscript annotation are details revealed doubtless in the frankness of conversation. For example, in the *Life*, as written by Tatham for posterity, Mrs. Blake is a Saint and an Angel. But here, to the annotator, she is—even allowing for the distress occasioned by her loss—"hardly the passive creture". The Will episode is startling unless it can be explained by the destroyed document being only a copy. Anyhow, the episode does not appear in Tatham's or any other biography of Blake. Nor does the account of William having appeared to her from the Spirit world. He "had been with her all night": how natural that reads of the man who held "visionary conversations with many majestic shadows from the Past";

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and who described to Allan Cunningham a fairy's funeral he had witnessed.

But who was the writer of these highly interesting annotations? They are signed J.H.; and taking the initials in conjunction with the ownership signature of Elizabeth Hogarth, the only conclusion I can arrive at is that he was Joseph Hogarth, who was a contemporary of Frederick Tatham—for although his annotations (the script is that of an elderly person) are dated 1877, Tatham did not die until the following year. The identification of this "J.H." with Joseph Hogarth is also considered probable by Mr. Archibald G. B. Russell, Lancaster Herald of the College of Arms, to whom we owe Tatham's long-hidden *Life of William Blake*. This Joseph Hogarth is, for the present, somewhat of a mystery. He was connected with the firm of Joseph Hogarth and Sons, art publishers and dealers (with a Royal Appointment) of London; and doubtless is the same J. Hogarth who collaborated with J. Nichols in *The Works of William Hogarth . . . to which are added Anecdotes of the Author and his Works* (1833). Here we strike the most alluring clue of all—and one suggesting a fine opportunity for the ultimate owner of this unique copy of *Nollekens and His Times*. What relation were Elizabeth Hogarth, the former possessor of this copy, and Joseph Hogarth, the annotator of it, to William Hogarth, our greatest satiric artist? It is a curious fact that in no Life of, nor in any work on, William Hogarth have I been able to discover a reference to any children of his or offspring of his clandestine marriage to Jane Thornhill ("Sigismunda"). But it appears to be significant that Elizabeth and Joseph Hogarth reserved their respective marks of ownership and personal interest for this second volume of *Nollekens and His Times*, for in it John Thomas Smith includes his biographical sketch of William Hogarth —a sketch which the author heightened in his following edition of 1829 by such a reminiscence as this:

> Hogarth, who was a great frequenter of houses supported by libertines, went to Moll King's, in Covent Garden, accompanied by his friend Hayman [Francis Hayman, R.A.], who was at all times highly delighted to see that "*moral* teacher of mankind" sketch from Nature. They had not been in the brothel ten minutes, before Hogarth took out his book to draw two ladies, whose dispute bespake a warm contest; and, at last, one of them, who had taken a mouthful of wine or gin, squirted it in the other's face, which so delighted the artist that he exclaimed, "Frank, mind the b——'s mouth". This incident Hogarth has introduced in the third plate of his "Rake's Progress".

This extract is an example of the candidness of *Nollekens and His Times*, which, on its appearance, the *Gentleman's Magazine* described as "the most merciless specimen of biography that has ever fallen under our notice". John Thomas Smith—the most famous of all Keepers of Prints in the British Museum, and himself a fine engraver—was a character akin to Nollekens, Hogarth, and other great artists whose weaknesses he revelled in. There are little-known works attributed to him which—as in the case of Turner—are only fit for the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* of the B.M. Albeit, his *Nollekens* and also his *A Book for a Rainy Day* are wonderful stores of anecdote and information, and always "delightful to the reader". And had he not written the first-named, Elizabeth and Joseph Hogarth would not have made the notable association item here described; Mr. John Castle would not have had the opportunity of applying to it the old bookseller's rule; and I should have had one End-Paper subject the less for a pleasant investigation.

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MR. T. J. WISE AND HIS POPE TRIUMPH

To write of Mr. T. J. Wise is to mention the name of the bookman most widely known among the collectors of America and Britain. He has, moreover, figured in this Department in some collaborations with me in contributions on Brontë and Shelley. So that I count my readers and this expert as already well met. His latest book is before me, and is witness to his unwearying and ever-youthful devotion to his work in the cause of bibliography. It also illustrates how the wisdom of Wise flows in two streams. His many-volumed *Catalogue of the Ashley Library*, which describes his unrivalled collection of books and manuscripts, is a monument of collecting and bibliographical achievement and already has its place among the premier works of its kind. But beyond this is his series of Bibliographies and individual Catalogues of Borrow, the Brontës, the Brownings, Coleridge, Landor, Ruskin, Swinburne, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Dryden, and Conrad—in all, over a score of works. These are largely based on the same descriptions of first editions and "ana" recorded in the Ashley Library Catalogue; but they are on a more expansive scale. I can only say that the collecting world is very grateful for his care in seeing that what we miss in his great Catalogue swing (which is not very much) we have gained in his Bibliographic roundabouts. His latest—*A Pope Library: A Catalogue of Plays, Poems, & Prose Writings by Alexander Pope*—needs only one sentence to convey its importance: Mr. Wise believes that with the exception of a single-leaf poem of doubtful Pope authorship (*News from Court,* 1719) and a minor pamphlet ridiculing Edmund Curll, his collection of the poet's first editions is complete. If anyone questions what diligent collecting this has involved, let him start forming a rival collection. Mr. Wise possesses among his first-edition Popes the only known copy of an impious and indecent parody, *A Roman Catholick Version of the First Psalm. For the Use of a Young Lady* (1716); and one of the five known copies of *God's Revenge Against Punning* (1716). Even if the rival collector secures these two or other Pope rarities, he will be faced with a problem a thousand times more difficult than the *pons asinorum* of our youth—the riddle of the *Dunciad* which occupies 24 pages of description and elucidation by Mr. Wise, who has eight of the nine issues or variants of 1728, the first year of publication. The rival will also learn that a 1st issue of the 1st edition of the *Dunciad* sold at the Anderson Galleries in 1918 for $2,025; and that one other copy has since been catalogued at $3,000. Mr. Wise collates some 140 items, not including Popeana, which he has never made any effort to acquire. He adds that the number of books and pamphlets for, against, and about Pope is so large that anything like a complete collection would fill a large bookcase and require a substantial volume to describe. So that here is good scope without the obstacles presented by extreme rarity and costliness.

WELSH BOOKS PUBLISHED IN AMERICA

There is an American interest attaching to the announcement of the honour recently bestowed on Mr. Robert Owen, an unemployed quarryman, of Croesor, North Wales. The University of Wales has awarded him its honorary degree for his services to Welsh bibliography, literature, and history—a recognition the more appreciated because British universities are not lavish with such honours. Mr. Owen has been described as the prince of Welsh book-collectors. In his "Hermitage", as he calls his secluded home among the Welsh

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mountains, he has a collection of 18,000 books. It includes a section of Welsh books published in America which is claimed to be unrivalled.

THE BROTHERTON LIBRARY

The appearance of the first volume of the first Catalogue of a new National Library is an event not without its significance to us English-speaking peoples who have been founding libraries for so many centuries. Of late years the happy spectacle of wealthy industrialists and successful financiers turning their powers of purse and perseverance to book-collecting with the aim of leaving magnificent collections to the people has been seen most frequently in the United States. Britain, for good reasons, has been an accessory rather than a rival in this well-doing. But nevertheless her long tradition of library endowment has been maintained at intervals; and the most recent case is that of the late Lord Brotherton who, having formed a valuable collection of manuscripts and books at his Yorkshire seat, has endowed and left it, worthily housed at Roundhay Hall, Leeds, as a National Library for North-Eastern England. The first librarian of the Brotherton Library is Mr. John Alexander Symington; and his early work in organizing the library to its larger purpose has been quickly followed by the publication of the first part of the Catalogue of it, which he has compiled. The Library is mainly devoted to English History and Literature; and its treasures include four important MSS from the library of Dr. Anthony Askew, the great classical scholar. His collection was dispersed in 1774; and the four manuscripts here preserved together as a surviving relic are *A Commentary on Psalms XVIII-CXXIX* (a Greek MS. of the 11th century); Cicero's *De Officiis* (12th century); a collection of Religious Opinions compiled by Anastasius, the monk of Mount Sinai (Greek, 13th century); and a collection of Mathematical and Astronomical Excerpts from Ptolemy (Greek, 15th century). The two first are annotated. The Library has a pleasing and worthy array of illuminated MSS; a few chained books; and nearly 600 Incunables, with Italian, German, and French preponderating in this order of numerical strength. England is not well represented by half a dozen items, of which the earliest is the originally popular *Polychronicon* (1482), one of the comparatively common Caxtons of which over thirty are known. There is also *The Chastising of God's Children* (?1491) here attributed to Caxton's Press, although Blades—owing to the use of a title-page and the adoption of signatures—was inclined to credit it to Wynken de Worde. The Library has been formed—probably more by necessity than choice—on selective and representative lines, rather than aiming at completeness in any particular field, although by acquiring a series of 850 Charters and documents relating to Marrick Priory, Yorkshire (12th century) it is already concentrating on local history. There is thus a sound foundation for continuous library-building. This first volume of its Catalogue is limited to mediaeval and renaissance times. It is thoroughly illustrated; and Mr. Symington has aimed to make it descriptive rather than bibliographical. He has written a modestly short Preface; and my old corresponding friend Mr. George Parker Winship, of Harvard University Library, contributes the longer Introduction. There will probably be many who like myself will wish that he had not been so frugal himself, so that he could have given us more insight into the activities of Lord Brotherton as a collector; and more about the genesis of the library and the sources of its treasures. These things are

(Continued on page ix, rear advertising section.)

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LIMITED EDITIONS AND SCHOLARSHIP

by Robert Shafer

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WRITINGS OF HENRY JAMES *by LeRoy Phillips* (COWARD-MC CANN. $15.00)

LETTERS OF HENRY JAMES TO WALTER BERRY (BLACK SUN PRESS. $10.00)

BROWNIE *by George Gissing* (COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS. $5.00)

THESE books have all been published in limited editions. Of the first it is alleged that 525 copies were printed—500 for sale. The second is "strictly" limited to 116 copies, and the third is limited to 500. All three are well printed, on really good paper —the fine paper used in the *Bibliography*, however, being disfigured by one of those tasteless watermarks to which American manufacturers apparently are wedded. In the present instance the watermark is *"CRANE'S OLDE BOOK"*. It need scarcely be said that all three volumes are designed for a definitely limited portion of the public—for collectors; but it must be added that compilers and publishers evidently still think the collector can be induced to buy anything, if it concerns an author whose works are sought for, and if it is expensively produced in a small edition. The work so produced may be valuable, or it may be worthless;—this is, one judges, a comparatively unimportant distinction. But it is of the first importance that it should be expensive, and equally desirable that it should promptly become scarce.

Of the books listed above, the first is distinctly valuable. It is a revision and extension of the bibliography of James's writings which Mr. Phillips compiled and published in 1906, and which has long been out of print and very difficult to obtain. "James's productivity astounds me," wrote George Gissing to Joseph Conrad in May, 1903, and every student of James must feel grateful to the devoted labourer who has now made available a practically complete record of that astounding productivity. It was no light task, and it has been conscientiously performed. Probably Mr. Phillips has done just about what should be expected of a good bibliographer; but there is at present much disagreement on the subject, and it cannot be supposed that the majority of bibliographers have felt quite satisfied with this book. On the one hand there are the men—and Mr. Phillips is one of them—who think of bibliography primarily in terms of the collector. These men, with the enthusiastic support of many short-sighted booksellers, have reached great heights of absurdity in multiplying so-called "points" which, they claim, serve to identify issues, so that the collector may be sure he is getting his book in its absolutely first state. And, of course, if a first edition exists in several "states", there are collectors who will weakly fall in with the suggestion that they should try to form a complete set—and booksellers who will be delighted to aid. Thus when Rupert Brooke's *Letters from America* were published in England, the labels carrying the title on the back of the book were first

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wrongly printed with the date "1915". Upon discovery of the mistake, "the figure 5 was overprinted with a 6", and these corrected labels were used until new ones with "1916" properly printed on them could be made. This precious information Mr. Phillips gives —because the book has a long Preface by Henry James—but there is very little of this kind of thing littering his pages, so that the volume cannot greatly help those who have been trying to make book-collecting merely a silly game for rich but foolish men.

On the other hand, however, scholars, who have long valued bibliography as a humble but necessary instrument of research, have of late years tended to transform it, in becoming primarily bibliographers themselves. Close study of processes of manufacture has yielded results of value in the establishment or reconstruction of texts, and the suggestion has become inevitable that if scholars are now bibliographers, bibliographers should be recognized as scholars. What is to come of this nobody knows, but one zealous apostle of scholarly bibliography has declared that Mr. Phillips neglected his most important function in failing to make his book a complete record of all of James's revisions of his text in successive republications. A careful study of these alterations is indeed needed, but no one who is aware of what it would mean to present even a representative selection from the material for such a study—as the present reviewer may claim to, since he has himself been engaged with the problem—would dream that Mr. Phillips could have done anything of the kind without enlarging his work to such an extent as to have made it practically useless for the important purpose it now serves.

It may fairly be concluded, then, that bibliography should be governed to some extent by common sense; and that Mr. Phillips's catalogue—even though it is not, as he knows, quite complete simply as a record of all publications and republications of matter from James's hand—is eminently satisfactory and serviceable to the student. The one grave complaint against it is its excessive cost. Such a book serves a serious and important purpose only in the hands of students—yet this volume, compiled and produced for collectors, and made expensively for them, is evidently beyond the reach, not only of the majority of students, but even of many libraries. As it is, moreover, it can have yielded the compiler a profit at the best insignificant in comparison with the labour involved. It should be recognized, surely, that such books are not properly commercial undertakings at all; and that, though they should be well and permanently made, it would be better for them never to be produced than to be brought out as they now mostly are. The impression should not be given, however, that Mr. Phillips's bibliography is a conspicuously bad example of an evil condition. Probably the worst example in recent years is the monumental bibliography of William Blake's writings compiled by Mr. Geoffrey Keynes, and privately printed for members of the Grolier Club.

But, as was said above, if a book produced primarily for the collector happens, like Mr. Phillips's, to have any intrinsic value, this seems to be a matter of accident. James himself disliked bibliography, and refused to give Mr. Phillips any help when he first took up his task in 1904—as we learn from a letter of which Mr. Phillips, for whatever engaging reason, gives an excellent facsimile in the present edition of his work. And James disliked bibliography because he felt that authors themselves should be allowed to judge whether or not their earliest or slightest writings should be dug up for inspection. He recognized that publication placed his works

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more or less beyond his control, but he at least could and did refuse to lend any aid to those bent on snapping up unconsidered trifles. A writer's death, however, gives these fellows a free hand, and enables them to show that there is nothing at which they will stop, as is demonstrated by the other two books here under review.

One of them consists of sixteen letters addressed by James to Walter V. R. Berry during the period from June, 1905, to December, 1914. Of these, one had already been printed by Mr. Percy Lubbock in *The Letters of Henry James*. Whether or not Mr. Lubbock had access to the other fifteen, and rejected them, one does not know; but it is certain that they contribute practically nothing to our knowledge of James as a man, as a correspondent, as a novelist, as a critic, as a friend —as anything imaginable, in brief, that is significant. One finds him again using the screw-metaphor, but the evidence was already ample that he grew strangely fond of this metaphor in his elder days. One hears him commenting upon a pair of Egyptian figurines sent him by Berry—"so straight from five thousand years agone; with a straightness quite to match that of their little perpendicular tuckers in aspect: a lesson to this laide and crooked age, which will certainly send nothing down to posterity, least of all so remote a one, in any such compact and valid form". But this too, though it is interesting, is not in substance new. The present collection may be worth, to the student, about thirty cents.

And at the same rate the third volume under review should be worth not more than two cents. It is a case, at once flagrant and pompous, of grave-robbery at which nobody can feel anything except amusement mixed with indignation. There is a passage in Gissing's *New Grub Street* in which an unsuccessful novelist turned "literary adviser" is made to speak of his "adventures" when, as a quite young man, he spent a short time in the United States. The passage has long been known to be autobiographical. In it the "literary adviser", Whelpdale, tells how he supported himself for several months in Chicago by desperately writing short stories for the biggest newspaper there "and for others". In 1912 Mr. Morley Roberts, in his unfortunate book about Gissing, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland,* identified the "biggest" newspaper as the *Tribune*, and added: "I think it would be very interesting if some American student of Maitland would turn over the files of the *Tribune* in the years 1878 and 1879 and disinter the work he did there". Efforts at disinterment were duly made, as it now appears, by three men, each working without the knowledge of the others. Success came first to Mr. Christopher Hagerup who, by September, 1916, had discovered four tales, two signed with Gissing's initials and two unsigned, all of which seemed certainly to be from the novelist's hand. To Mr. Roberts's credit, when his advice was asked about republication, he decided against it; and Mr. Hagerup ended by agreeing with him, and gave up the notion. Not so, however, Mr. Vincent Starrett, who also had been poking about in the files of the *Tribune*, though in vain, and who had heard of the tales from Mr. Hagerup. Upon his first opportunity he published them, in an ugly and carelessly printed book, *The Sins of the Fathers* (1924), not claiming that they had the slightest merit, but only that "the early work of an author of Gissing's ability is not negligible, and often is of considerable biographical and bibliographical interest. And, anyway", he continued, "collectors of a man's work are always grateful for his least word, and the collectors of the work of George

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Gissing are an increasing race". To at least one person, Professor George Everett Hastings of the University of Arkansas, the appearance of *The Sins of the Fathers* was a "disaster". For he also, more recently, had been raking the files of the *Tribune*, and had discovered *eight* tales, three of them signed, one which could be shown to be Gissing's, another which he thought certainly to be Gissing's, and three more which he was still trying to identify as from the same hand when, first, most of his notes were unfortunately burned, and, shortly afterwards, *The Sins of the Fathers* was published.

There the matter might have rested. Scholarship of a kind had been served. The collector had been served. Gissing had survived the blow below the belt delivered in Chicago. But Professor Hastings of course had not been served, and in December, 1927, in Louisville, Kentucky, he met Professor Thomas Ollive Mabbott of Hunter College of the City of New York, and told him his story. The outcome is the volume under review. Professor Mabbott, "by his own smart thinking" about the significance of Whelpdale's statement that he had written for other papers besides the *Tribune*, was led to examine the files of the Chicago *Journal* and of the Chicago *Post*, and found three more tales which are now ascribed to Gissing. Thus the present volume contains seven stories, one of which Gissing certainly wrote, three of which the editors believe he wrote, and three of which they hope he wrote. They are all exceedingly bad, and it really makes not the slightest difference whether Gissing was guilty of them or not. They shed no new light on his life, and everybody knew long ago that the writing of fiction came hard to Gissing. Only as an example of misguided zeal is this volume monumental, and one would like to know how the Columbia University Press came to lend its name to a travesty of scholarship from which somebody should have saved it.

One of the trinity of editors of *Brownie*—which, despite multiplied care, is not free from misprints—remarks that his first attempt at disinterment was inspired by the example of "Thackeray's biographers". Well, one of them happens to furnish the only fit commentary upon the performance of the Columbia Press's trinity, though Messrs. Hastings, Starrett, and Mabbott have succeeded in making his first sentence no longer true. Charles Whibley, in his volume on Thackeray published nearly thirty years ago, wrote: "No writer has suffered more bitterly than Thackeray from the indiscreet zeal of admirers. Nothing that he ever wrote has seemed to the bibliographers too trivial for preservation. To 'spot' his contributions to *Fraser's* and other magazines has become a kind of parlour game for the cultured, and since his death many pieces have been unearthed which he no doubt was happy to forget. The injustice of this practice is obvious. Thackeray had abundant time in which to collect the work by which he chose to be remembered, and no good purpose is served by the pious ingenuity of those who bind up into books the experiments in journalism overlooked by himself. The excellence of *Vanity Fair* imparts no quality to a set of articles contributed fifteen years previously to a dead newspaper. However, it is now idle to ignore his *juvenilia*, and though they throw little light upon his maturer works, as editors are wont to pretend, it may be said that he emerges from a trying ordeal far better than would the most of men". If it cannot be said that Gissing similarly emerges, still, it is quite safe to prophesy that he will also survive this second blow. One must hope, however, that the literary ghouls have now done their last, as they have certainly done their worst.

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THE NEW BOOKS

HISTORY OF ITALIAN LITERATURE

by Francesco De Sanctis (HARCOURT, BRACE. $7.50)

IF WHAT Benedetto Croce has written in his *Æsthetic* is true, the greatest of all literary critics is almost unknown. "As critic and historian of literature he [Francesco De Sanctis] is unrivalled." Among the famous critics whom Croce considers inferior to De Sanctis is Sainte-Beuve. Now Sainte-Beuve holds such a very high position, is acknowledged in so many places as the "sovereign critic", that a brief comparison of the two men suggests itself, especially since they lived at the same time. And in comparing him to the Frenchman we may succeed in conveying an impression of the Italian.

At first the comparison will seem decidedly in favour of Sainte-Beuve. The effect of his *Lundis* is almost to make us feel that we could not wish for better criticism. It is as though he had laid out a park which contained not only the most delicate flowers but one acre of practically wild forest. What orderly scope! Here is the French genius; here is what has made French criticism a standard for all the world. On the other hand it is possible to read the first chapters of De Sanctis's book and have no feelings at all. There is no "brilliance", no personality; the author seems not to exist. We read on chiefly for information until we feel that we have been missing something, and turn back to the beginning and start over again. And then we begin to appreciate the book's significance.

Our comparison will gain ground if we define briefly the point of view of each of these two critics. This is not difficult in the case of Sainte-Beuve. The friend of bluestockings, the keeper of the Mazarin Library, the member of the French Academy, are too apparent in this product of the most highly organized of modern cultures. Yes, here is the French genius, and part of it consists in not differing too widely from other Frenchmen. His most individual opinions only make it clearer that his point of view is essentially the point of view of the average man of culture of his nation. (This conventionality reveals itself in his inability to go the limit with very great souls—Pascal's for example.) The point of view of De Sanctis, on the other hand, is hard to determine. It is so wise, so good-humoured, so impersonal that for a long time we do not notice that it is radical. But after a while even his statements of fact take on a new, a revolutionary significance. Every word, we begin to perceive, bears the mark of a solitary experience, a thorough reconsidering of fundamentals. It is extremely significant that De Sanctis spent three years in prison for his opinions. In the sense given the word by Socrates (for as a scientific aesthetician Croce finds fault with him) he is a true philosopher. He judges books—that is, men—in the light not of the circle of Victor Hugo, nor the salon of Mme Récamier, nor the public of *Le Constitutionnel*, but in the light of the eternal.

Along with a profundity that enables him to go to their extremities with the greatest, De Sanctis possesses an incomparable range

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of appreciation. Apparently he has no blind spots. Whether his subject is Saint Catherine of Siena or the depraved Aretino, he responds with an equal critical enthusiasm. There is no wall within him that shuts out any kind of subject matter *per se*; whatever is written and lives—he loves that in any form. This does not mean that he is a spineless impressionist. On the contrary, no critic has had a more highly developed moral sense; it is just this that makes him such an infallible judge between real and factitious life. For his moral sense and his æsthetic sense are so divinely balanced that the former does not blunt his aesthetic perceptions but actually refines and deepens them. In much the same way his philosophic passion is balanced by an extraordinary training and equipment as a man of letters. Style is in the blood of this son of Italy, "the mother of the arts". Born in a land where speech is held in singular esteem, he gets his poetics from his tongue; and they are both spontaneous and authoritative. His understanding in matters of style makes some of the most respected critics of other countries seem like amateurs or barbarians. But though his scholarship is colossal we never think of it; few learned men have made so little show of their learning. Here is a real man of letters, steeped in the cunning and ancient lore of his craft, withal simple and direct. His almost unnoticeable style is a miraculous union of explicitness and grace. If our taste had not been corrupted by the modern craving for "brilliance", we would perceive that it is more manly and purer than Sainte-Beuve's.

The truth is that this little-known *History of Italian Literature* demands consideration as one of the principal monuments of the nineteenth century. It is a work of art, and a great one. The force that created it, we might observe, was patriotism. Love of Italy both set De Sanctis his task and fired his imagination. We need not say that this love was not chauvinistic. He saw his country in a clear light. Not even Machiavelli was more sensitive of Italy's decadence. It is the relentless description by De Sanctis of this, together with his paternal understanding of the Italian character, that gives the *History* its unforgettable edge. We feel throughout that he was qualified as no other to write this book; that its subject was flesh and blood to him; that in a sense he *was* the history of Italian literature. This is important in view of the fact that after the book's completion, except for a few supplementary essays, he turned away from writing and plunged into practical life. It is possible that when he had created the *History* he found he had created himself, and had nothing more to say. The book is the perfect fruit of a lifetime, a work of genius.

De Sanctis lived from 1818 to 1883. The *History* was published 1870-71. This is its first appearance in a foreign tongue. It was neglected in Italy until the beginning of this century, and then became a classic. It will probably be neglected in America. But the small number of people who love literature, whatever their knowledge of De Sanctis's subject, will find his book beyond value.

GERALD SYKES

A TREASURY OF IRISH POETRY IN THE ENGLISH TONGUE *edited by Stafford A. Brooke and T. W. Rolleston* (MACMILLAN. $3.00)

ALTHOUGH Irish poetry has been written for countless ages, it is only within the past hundred years that it has become known and appreciated outside of Ireland. It was formerly concerned with aggression against England, which was a serious limitation to its

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appreciation by any but Irishmen, and it was also written, for the most part, in Irish, which restricted it even more. Now that the Irish poets have become less concerned with the wrongs inflicted on Ireland by England, and since they have forsaken their native language for English, their poetry has become more widely read and cherished. Irish poetry is not great poetry, but much of it is very good poetry. The Irish poets have certain qualities which no other poets possess. They have, in the first place, a genuine love for nature and the simple things in life. They have also a background permeated with reverence and mysticism which still exerts a tremendous influence on all that they write. And, finally, they have an almost child-like simplicity which is frequently fantastic and whimsical.

The range of this volume is wide, including, as it does, Irish poets from the times of the early street ballads, through the poets of the Nation, those of the Irish Renaissance, such as Allingham, Tynan, A.E. and Yeats, and finally terminating with a section devoted to those poets who are still alive or have died only recently, amongst which we find Colum, Pearse, Joyce, Ledwidge, and O'Sullivan. A serious defect, however, is the omission of any of the splendid translations made by Robin Flower, and the failure of the editors to include some of the poetry of L. A. G. Strong. There is also a misprint in Joseph Campbell's *The Old Woman* which mars the poem.

The selections from each of the poets is prefaced by a brief biographical and critical estimate. These, written by authorities on Irish poetry, are invaluable. The volume is to be highly recommended to the ever-growing ranks of those who are learning to love and treasure the poetry of Ireland.

E. SINCLAIR HERTELL

COMMON SENSE ABOUT POETRY *by L. A. G. Strong* (KNOPF. $1.50)

MR. STRONG'S little book is a brilliant example of what common sense and literary skill can do with a great subject. It is quite the best invitation to those who might need poetry to read poetry, and by a scrupulous and seductive description and display of the material, technique and effects of poetry he eases the ascent to Parnassus without cutting off its height. Much that is said will interest those in the habit of reading poetry—asides such as the relation between pronunciation and quantity-value expressed in the Rhodes scholar's line, "O hopes tempor*air*ily blighted!" Underlying all this is a serious preoccupation with the place of poetry in our present state of mind. As a poet himself Mr. Strong does not doubt the value of poetry; as an ex-schoolmaster he knows how little hold it has on the public. The objections against poetry are not altogether met by showing that some poets have fine characters. The sensory pleasures of verse are not sufficient to proclaim its importance. Why, in the name of common sense, should poetry be read? One of the merits of the book is that it shows how far a literary answer will satisfy a so-called scientific age—an age which is scientific mainly in its use of the terms of science. The answer is that poetry provides a "different aspect of reality"—not greatly beyond the answers of Sidney and Shelley, but how carefully subdued is its appeal for poetic values in a prose age compared with the eloquence of *The Apologie* and the wild and whirling words of *The Defence*! The answer will not satisfy those who find ambiguity in the literary use of "Truth", "Reality", "new Knowledge", et cetera, but it will appeal to those whose common sense allows them to feel the direct stimulus of experience with-

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out waiting for its "value" to be defined. The upshot of course is that if you miss poetry through preoccupation with the affairs of life or the abstractions of science you undoubtedly miss something that has enriched the lives of others—and this enrichment Mr. Strong generously shows.

PETER MUNRO JACK

ST. IGNATIUS *by Christopher Hollis* (HARPERS. $2.50)

THIS life of the soldier-saint is sympathetically and interestingly written, as well as sincere and historically sound. It is well worth reading if you are interested in Saint Ignatius, or in the Jesuits, or in the Catholic Church.

Ignatius of Loyola was a Basque of noble family. As a soldier, he had risen to the rank of captain when, defending Pamplona against the French, he suffered a wound. During his prolonged convalescence he read Ludolph of Saxony's life of Christ, and some lives of the saints. This reading it was that started him on the paths of sanctity and of learning. The conversion of the heathen, particularly in Palestine, was his purpose in founding the Company (or Society) of Jesus. It was his plan that the Jesuits should be, as they are, the light cavalry of the Church: perfectly disciplined and mobile, ready, at the command of a superior, to go upon the instant, without provision for the journey, to any part of the world. Hollis enthusiastically and vividly pictures Saint Ignatius's achievement in his application of military virtues and organization to the service of religion.

This book is fuller, and, I think, more painstakingly accurate than Francis Thompson's. The style is less readable, yet ultimately more satisfactory, since it does not distract with rush of words and constant conscious artistry. Hollis records controversies and quotes authorities, where Thompson sets down the probability as the truth, and hastens on with the story. Hollis's view of the historical background and of the political and social conditions of the time is vividly transcribed and generally accurate.

Mr. Hollis well says in his concluding chapter: "The first truth about Saint Ignatius is that he was in love with God". Better art and more essentially faithful biography might have resulted from making this love the dominating *motif* of the book, as it was of Ignatius's life; from giving the saint's mystical experiences as much attention as his physical activities. However, the book as it is is effective as a source of edification, entertainment, or information.

KENTON KILMER

IMPRESSIONS OF JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE *by Ralph Adams Cram* (MARSHALL JONES. $4.00)

THIS volume is a reprint, with the exception of the Conclusion, of an excellent collection of essays on the architecture and allied arts of Japan, first published in 1905 and long out of print. It is particularly welcome at the present moment for three rather different reasons. First of all, it is probably the best short survey of Japanese art that exists in English. Although discussions of architecture and interior decoration, in theory and detail, occupy more than half of the book, and the development of painting, sculpture, landscape-gardening and the minor arts is summed up in brief résumé, the arts are treated throughout so consistently as various aspects of the same thing that one is left with a fine sense of their combined significance in Japanese culture. From the influx of Buddhism at the end of the sixth century to the opening of the ports in the middle of the

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nineteenth is one long gradual unbroken curve in the history of Japanese art. And our Western succession of Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance—followed by the even hastier and more nervous reiterations of the past two centuries—must inevitably seem restless and imperfect by comparison. But the smooth curve and the jagged one have the same roots, for, as Dr. Cram points out, the early Korean-influenced temples of Japan bear exactly the same relation to Greece as does the Romanesque: it is only the trackless steps across the East that render it unfamiliar to Western eyes. And it is the essential blood-kinship of this "perfect style in wood" that Dr. Cram emphasizes, rather than the more superficially apparent exotic strangeness.

This kinship, however, is much more immediate than the author himself appears to realize. The principles behind the best Japanese architecture and interior decoration and disposition are, as Dr. Cram states and illustrates them, almost identical with those which are producing the best and clearest modern work of the West, scarce and misunderstood as it is as yet. Fitness to purpose and surroundings, honest pleasure in material, reposeful simplicity, elimination of the unnecessary and the working out of communal type-solutions, are ideals as new in the West as they are old and tried in the East. And an appreciative understanding of what these principles have achieved in the course of rich twelve-century-long development and decline cannot but be immensely valuable to the beginning Westerner, as some indication not only of the ultimate virtues to be attained, but also of the most vulnerable points of weakness, in over-stylization, in formality to the point of discomfort. It is interesting to note that the 1905 edition of this book was acclaimed by a twelve-page review in *The Craftsman*, that well-meaning if often misguided early manifestation of the rational modern spirit.

And finally, these essays are a perfect example of that extraordinary and wilful inconsistency which marks the scholarly gentlemen of the old school of whom Dr. Cram is perhaps the most distinguished representative. I said that the author was unaware of the kinship between the best of Japan and the best contemporary experiments. But "unaware" is no word to use for his militant contempt for all things modern. In his appreciation of the honesty of ancient Japanese architecture, its environmental and emotional fitness, its indigenous quality, the essential relationship between method and the state of society, industry, economics . . . no one could be clearer or more pointed. Whole paragraphs could have been written by Mr. Oud or Mr. Mumford, as a modern credo. But what does one discover? On the very first page, that the author had shamelessly "built a pseudo-Japanese house in Fall River"! Of all the architects of our day, surely none has been more concretely and inconsistently guilty of evoking the "archæological Frankenstein, soulless, dead, doomed to sudden extinction" (see p. 107) than Dr. Cram himself.

C. K. BAUER

ONCE A GRAND DUKE *by Alexander, Grand Duke of Russia* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $3.50)

THESE memoirs of the Grand Duke Alexander, cousin to the late Czar Nicholas II, form, in their way, as interesting a monument to the imperial régime in Russia as any we have. There is little grace in their telling, but the events themselves are of such magnitude that grace is unnecessary. Although they

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surpass in historical interest the reminiscences of the Grand Duchess Marie, they have little of that breadth of sympathy which made her *Education of a Princess* such an appealing document. After all, the Grand Duchess participated scarcely at all in the drama of political events, and was forced at her marriage to cast in her lot with a foreign country. She was also, one thinks, at heart a democrat.

The Grand Duke Alexander, notwithstanding his distaste for life at the Imperial Court and his rebellious insistence upon joining the navy, reveals himself as an imperialist to the core, as a man who held his ducal oath sacred and inviolable, as a man who believed profoundly in the rightness of the imperial order and in the divine sources of its being. Perhaps the reader will find him an anachronism, but one can hardly fail to be interested and moved by his sincerity.

Alexander gives us conscientious, and often scathing, portraits of the imperial family, although he is generous in acclaiming virtues. He furnishes an interesting analysis of the Czar's financial situation, and disposes of the current notion that there is still in existence a fabulous Romanoff fortune. The most important chapters of his book, however, are those which depict the course of government in Imperial Russia. Alexander stood close to the Czar during the futile, vacillating, tragic years of his reign, and was able to observe with dreadful clarity the approaching disaster of the Revolution.

Once a Grand Duke is naturally not a light-hearted book. Neither in the event nor in its conclusion can Alexander find any justification for the sacrifices he has witnessed. The war was a mockery, and so was the peace, with the attendant failure of the Allies to rescue Russia from the Bolsheviki, with the ruthless redistribution of Russian provinces. Nor have the years since the Versailles Conference produced for Grand Duke Alexander an answer to the ghastly and meaningless puzzle. "The fate of the three European empires shook my belief in the idea of Great Powers," he writes in conclusion. "Thirteen years of the Communistic experiment killed my illusions of the great power of Ideas. There is no third way left for humanity so long as it remains in its present state of spiritual ignorance."

MARGARET WALLACE

WAY OF THE LANCER *by Richard Boleslavski in collaboration with Helen Woodward* (BOBBS-MERRILL. $3.00)

THIS work in some ways recalls Xenophon's masterpiece. When the Czar abdicated, Boleslavski's Polish regiment "did not want to have anything to do with the changes in Russia. We wanted to stick to our own formation and work for the resurrection of the Polish state". The Czar had assured them that Poland's restoration was contingent on Russia's triumph in the field; the Poles, consequently, would have liked to go on with the war. But the Russian army collapsed. "Our situation was serious. There was no way to go and no place at which to aim. The Austrian front seemed nearest. Perhaps we could find the section occupied by Austrian Polish Legionaries. They would let us through. But to get there we would have to cover two or three hundred miles through rebellious country, full of wild and loose peasants and soldiers—two hundred of us against many thousands of them!"

Boleslavski's book does not end with exultant cries of "Thalassa!" The Lancers had to disband before they arrived within hailing distance of their Austrian brothers; one never, in fact, gets to know what cries would have been uttered if Pole had met Pole

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in these delicate circumstances. But the drama, the uncertainty, the conflicts in point of view, all the observations incidental to such a dilemma are set down in *Way of the Lancer* in a style that is philosophic but not unfeeling. Boleslavski calls himself a "White", but he is a White by virtue of his detachment from the revolutionary ideals rather than antagonism to them. Possibly some professional experience as an actor has tended to strengthen in him, as a primary trait, his perception of character and of human drama. The plunder and rape, the fanatical violence, the political optimism and misguided intransigence of the early days of the revolution have seldom been more fully and intelligently recorded.

ROBERTS TAPLEY

SUPERMAN: THE LIFE OF FREDERICK THE GREAT *by Nathan Ausubel* (WASHBURN. $4.00)

MR. AUSUBEL has attempted in these pages to present a complete and detailed portrait of that strange monarch, Frederick the Great. It is a staggering undertaking. The genius of Frederick was so various, his character at once so positive and so contradictory, that he is scarcely to be explained in the confines of a single volume. If Mr. Ausubel has not entirely succeeded in explaining him—and it must be admitted that he has not—still one can only admire the energy and skill that have gone into this book.

The author has given in some detail the preliminary portraits of Frederick's father and grandfather, portraits which are necessary if the reader is to be able to trace those curiously blended Hohenzollern traits of shrewdness and cruelty, generosity and half-mad ambition which contributed so largely to the formation of the pre-war German state. He has written an uncommonly detailed description of Frederick's tormented childhood and youth, of his education, which combined an open concentration on the practical and the military with a stolen indulgence in music and philosophy, of the formation of his ideals of statesmanship and of the growth of his thirst for immortality—a thirst which was the more insatiable, probably, because he was incapable of simpler and less expensive lusts.

Quite justifiably Mr. Ausubel has refrained from an attempt to define Frederick's thwarted sexual nature, or to draw exact generalizations from the few facts that can be substantiated. In other respects he has handled Frederick's personal life and character admirably. The descriptions of his circle of philosophers at Sans Souci and of his relations with his court genius, Voltaire, are particularly fine and carefully documented. When he approaches Frederick's military career, however, Mr. Ausubel's touch is less sure. If one were to form one's conceptions of the Prussian monarch's military genius from the strategy described by Mr. Ausubel, one would be forced to conclude that the triumphs of the Seven Years' War were largely accidental—an assumption which would scarcely be fair to the man of whom Napoleon said: "It was not the Prussian army that defended Prussia for seven years against the three greatest powers of Europe, but Frederick the Great".

MARGARET WALLACE

THE GERMANS: AN INQUIRY AND AN ESTIMATE *by George N. Shuster* (DIAL PRESS. $3.00)

MR. SHUSTER has attempted the difficult task of appraising contemporary Germany as a whole and in most of its important parts. In

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the main the result is commendable. No one person can be equally familiar with such diverse fields as politics, economics, diplomacy, science, art, literature, philosophy and religion, and Mr. Shuster's book is rather thin on a number of these subjects. For example, he merely skims the surface of German literature, art, philosophy and education, and does scanty justice to the universities and scholarship in general. When he comes to politics and economics he is more at home, and his observations show considerable first-hand knowledge and a good deal of acuteness and reflection even though they do not always carry conviction.

The most obvious characteristics of Germany today, at least to a foreigner, are its political instability and its economic distress. The elements of its political instability are partly internal, compounded of party dissension and sharp challenges to political leadership, and partly the peculiar irritations created by the Treaty of Versailles and the international position of the country since the war. Mr. Shuster sees President von Hindenburg as "the peer of George Washington" and Chancellor Bruening as a "godsend", but of other political leaders he does not seem to think very highly. The Hitler movement appears to him as a sinister force because of its embodied discontent, with fascism and communism looming as alternative possibilities. He finds no important evidence of a desire to recover Alsace-Lorraine, but German commerce is ousting the French from the Saar which they "should never have entered", the Polish corridor and Upper Silesia have caused "profound bitterness" and hardened German nationalism, and union with Austria, which both countries desire, is adjudged natural and desirable.

The economic crisis, on the other hand, manifesting itself in various ways besides that of ghastly unemployment, has its roots in the struggle of the nation which, while naturally individualistic, had become before the World War the highly socialized State which it still remains to escape from the territorial, industrial, commercial and financial constrictions which the peace imposed upon it. On the question of reparations Mr. Shuster has little that is novel to offer. Like every student of the subject who is not French in allegiance or bias, he is clear that the German people cannot be expected to go on for generations paying a financial penalty for losing the war, and insists that the burden will have to be reduced to something practical. The readjustment seem to him to depend primarily upon the attitude of the United States, and while he sees no likelihood that the war debts to this country will be cancelled, he suggests that the United States might lend back to Germany without interest the debt payments, thereby enabling Germany to pay off obligations carrying a high interest charge, and "through some special trade agreements give certain German industries a preferential rating in its own markets".

It is curious to find Mr. Shuster, at the end of his book, urging strongly a frank recognition by this country of the "superior position" of France in Europe—a position mainly due to the French army, which exists, as he properly admits, "to prevent any action in Europe of which the leaders of France disapprove"—at the same time that "we must finally succeed in convincing the French that as a people we know what we want and how to get it". The occasion for this latter counsel is the backing and filling in which the United States has indulged since the war in regard to disarmament, the League of Nations, and internationalism generally. Apparently Mr. Shuster believes that this

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would materially aid the Franco-German rapprochement which, in common with everybody capable of taking a statesman-like view of the European situation, he regards as highly desirable. "To revere France and Germany", he declares, "is the fundamental American problem." Perhaps Mr. Shuster has in mind another book in which he will state the French side of the case as sympathetically and understandingly as he has here stated that of Germany, but even so the problem of instilling reverence for French policy into the American mind is likely to prove difficult.

WILLIAM MACDONALD

MANCHURIA, CRADLE OF CONFLICT
by Owen Lattimore (MACMILLAN. $3.00)

MANCHURIA, THE COCKPIT OF ASIA
by Colonel P. T. Etherton and H. Hessell Tiltman (STOKES. $3.00)

OWEN LATTIMORE's book unites solid and comprehensive exposition with a lucid narrative style. Students, lay or scholarly, will find in this text a satisfying wideness and depth of view. Existing conditions in Manchuria are shown to be the more or less inescapable result of conflicting racial stocks and established "ways of life". The major racial problems bearing upon the future of Manchuria are of course Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. There are thirty odd millions of Chinese residents in Manchuria—a huge population preponderance. These Chinese are neither alike in important traits nor possessed of identical worldly preferences. Traditions—local, semi-local, foreign—operate on and through the lives of individuals with rather patternized effects. Against a special immobility of habit or custom, the modern world has turned the disruptive force of a machine-grounded "way of life".

The Japanese have welcomed the belated philosophy of mechanization. Through them, the western world has impinged upon Chinese self-sufficiency. Aloofness from the crudely material competitions of the West has become as perilous as it was in the beginning tenaciously regarded and cherished. Japanese "aggression" is not wholly a question of land or banking or manufacturing. The collision of Chinese and Japanese has been further complicated by the Russians, who represent an economic and political order, "a way of life", thus far but meagrely foreseen or foreseeable even by themselves. Russia is the truly unknown factor, the observable but incalculable crucial element in the Far East. For the Far East—as this illuminating volume amply demonstrates—is in the throes of essential modification.

Mr. Lattimore's discussion of the conflict "in spirit" between the East and the West causes one to doubt that the ultimate difference has been clearly envisaged. The modern industrial régime is manifestly a consequence of the action of the spirit of what we know as science upon the natural world. The common element in all experimental science is method. The Chinese have developed this method, or its counterpart, to a remarkable degree in the sphere of human relations. They have scorned until recently its application to nature and to the economic life which derives from such application. There are indications of slow but effectual absorption of scientific method into the eastern scheme of things. If and when such absorption finally occurs, Mr. Lattimore's work may well be of permanent value to scholars. It reveals, with an abundance of factual material, the contemporary Manchurian trend toward synthesis in ways of living.

The volume by Colonel Etherton and Mr. Tiltman can scarcely claim to be more than

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what it obviously is—a good journalistic summary of the present Manchurian scene. The outstanding historical items are duly mentioned and the more patent causes of military and economic rivalry are explained. The qualities of pervasive philosophic interest and deliberate scholarship which dignify Mr. Lattimore's tract are here for the most part absent.

ARMAND BURKE

THE HISTORY AND IDEALS OF AMERICAN ART *by Eugene Neuhaus* (STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. $5.50)

IF, during the last ten years or so, America has witnessed a huge wave of foreign modernism in the arts, it has also broadly experienced a conscious interest in itself: its history and its art. Early "native" architecture (not to mention the skyscraper), interiors, steel engravings, all have received their share of attention from both the critic and layman. Hence it is no more than fair that early, even "provincial", as well as later painting should come in for its just share of recognition on the part of the historian, as well as by the aesthetic critic.

It is, then, in this double capacity that Professor Neuhaus (of the Department of Fine Arts at the University of California) has essayed the "historical and aesthetic analysis of American art and of the outside influences which shaped its course from its meagre beginnings in the New England States to its harvest of the present day all over the country, in the hope that such a survey may develop a pride in our artistic achievements and also may contribute to the formation of good taste".

An excellent and courageous undertaking that! But how well has the author succeeded? As an historian he has collected an invaluable compendium of ready references, helpful alike to student and layman, and has traced broadly the various successive foreign (Italian, French, Dutch, and English) and domestic influences that conditioned the development of our "native" art. But, indeed, how much of this art is really "native", and how much foreign or imitative? And how much of it is *really* art? That is the function of the critic to determine—a very ticklish task, if not a thankless one. Professor Neuhaus has tackled this portion of his job valiantly but not always convincingly. Granting the native subject-matter and the individual emotional quality of the artists of even such representative groups as, let us say, the Hudson River School of Landscape-Painting, such as John F. Kensett, Asher B. Durand and Sandford R. Gifford—or the Figure-Painters, such as Thomas Eakins, Frank D. Millet, Mary Cassatt, and William T. Dannat —or the Romantics, such as Horatio Walker, Albert Ryder, and Ralph Blakelock (not to mention the earlier portraitists, or the present-day army of modernists)—how much, really, in mental approach and technique are these schools native American? Professor Neuhaus, perhaps a bit over-enthusiastic, thinks much—but do the pictures in question sustain his verdict? We doubt it. Nor is our confidence in his artistic judgment fortified by such statements as "The great achievement of British art . . . began with the portrait artists of the eighteenth century, Reynolds and Gainsborough". And Hogarth's influence is not even mentioned.

However, with its handsome format and mine of beautiful reproductions, convenient lists of references, index, and biographical notes, this book will prove an indispensable source of information, and is a thing of beauty.

DINO FERRARI

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BEHIND MOROCCAN WALLS *by Henriette Celarié* (MACMILLAN. $5.00)

THE elements of tale, sketch, and travel diary are so commingled in this book that it defies classification. Its substance, however, is "rigorously true", according to Mme Celarié, who is the wife of a French colonial officer and the author of *Amour marocaine* and *La Vie mysterieuse des harems*, two volumes from which the eighteen "chapters" of the present translation have been selected and adapted by Constance Lily Morris.

The French titles are indicative of the somewhat sensational and erotic subjects represented: maternity without benefit of clergy opens the book in the story of *The Girl Possessed of a Djinn*; there follow next easy divorces, abductions or escapes of slave-girls, the deceiving and poisoning of husbands, court procedure against light women, and kindred scenes from Moroccan life. Most of these stories are told by native women, who are allowed to speak their own pieces within the frame of visits (at tea-time, and once at dinner) which the author pays to their respective houses. A number of the confessions heard and retold by Mme Celarié bear the marks of a natural narrative gift, notably one story told by an old negress, of her early kidnapping and induction into slavery: this story was written down "just as she spoke . . . without altering a word". One frequently glimpses the author sitting thus in the circle of her characters, pencil in hand; and such dictated passages are enlivened by the native imagery of proverbial allusion which especially characterizes Islamic peoples. The description of a pretty young girl as one whom "a flock of sheep would stop eating to look at" might figure in Dr. Westermarck's recently translated compendium of Moroccan "wit and wisdom".

Physically, the book is a very handsome one. It includes twenty drawings by Boris Artzybasheff, which the artist made in Morocco, though for the most part on the outer side of Mme Celarié's harem walls.

HANSELL BAUGH

LAUGHING IN THE JUNGLE *by Louis Adamic* (HARPERS. $3.00)

THIS is the type of autobiography that proves interesting rather for its material than for its style. The book is given no particular form, directed toward no obvious purpose, the writing is not sensational, neither is it particularly fine. The power of the book lies in the fact that it is an account of the experiences of an intelligent man of action, a man who has seen things in great variety, a man who has studied many kinds of people, has travelled over all of this country, has made observations on almost every phase of the American scene.

Louis Adamic, born in the Slovenian duchy of Austria, came to America at the age of sixteen. When he closed his story he was thirty. Possessed of great physical vitality, a natural zest for life, and a keen mind, he has studied and recorded carefully the lives of immigrants in this country; he gives us his personal autobiography which is, as he says, not an "up from the slums" success story. There is no direct propaganda in his tale unless one wishes to draw rather obvious deductions; there is no rancour, no prejudice against America. Mr. Adamic has a strong and racy sense of humour, a feeling for the dramatic and for local colour. He presents a cross-section of the American "Jungle"—a title he took from the first book he read in English which thrilled him.

Arriving in New York on New Year's Eve, Adamic saw America first in holiday

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mood. He went to live on the East Side and saw the confusions of ideals for which the country stood in the minds of the newcomers there. He became a worker on a paper before he could read with any ease. He travelled through settlements of industrial workers and found the peasants there. Along came the war and he went. In training and in the trenches he came to know intimately some of the most amazing characters. His sketches of these men are among the best things in the book. Returning from the war, Adamic found himself no hero but a man out of work. He began to travel at random and came finally to Los Angeles, one of the most chaotic cities in this country. He helped to organize the I. W. W. demonstration against Wilson in 1919. And the account of Wilson's passage through Seattle, of his entering the street of silent men, thousands of them, standing and staring at him, a mute condemnation of his policies, is something one can never forget. This is the most dramatic chapter in the book. Adamic is sometimes called, even today, the man who killed Wilson, for the wobblies believe they killed him with that protest; and, indeed, Wilson had crumpled there in his car into the old and feeble man who died, not so long thereafter, disillusioned and tragic. This is, of course, the same material used by Dos Passos in *1919*. Adamic writes of it more vividly, it seems to me.

Other chapters are on the lives of his own people in this country and their simple tragedies. When the book closes we have a vivid study of America, of its absurd contrasts, its economic, religious and political fanaticisms. It might have been better written; it might have had more purpose; but in that event it would have lost the effect of the utter realism which is now its chief power.

EDA LOU WALTON

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THE NEW NOVELS

BRAVE NEW WORLD *by Aldous Huxley* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

AT TIMES when he speaks in his own person Aldous Huxley inclines toward a sort of Greek ideal of wholeness and symmetry in which mind and body might have healthy and proportionate development. But in his satires such an ideal becomes conspicuous, if at all, by its absence. Older satirists for the most part ridiculed excesses from and in contrast to a definite middle ground, but Mr. Huxley ridicules them by contrast only with their opposites, leaving the mean deserted. The title *Point Counter Point* symbolizes his method. Excess of intellectuality is contrasted with excess of sensuality; hypocrisy with silly guilelessness; the overweaning "Napoleonic complex" with the hateful "inferiority complex"; silly bohemianism with immoderate absorption in science, et cetera.

This lack of an evident norm is undoubtedly a weakness. At the same time his satiric ability is amazing. His range of information is immense and his power of critical analysis admirable. Furthermore he stops at nothing. With blithe objectivity he exposes not only the pretensions of modish sophistication but even the animal origin of those things men most admire and reverence. To uncover the beast behind the saint gives him keen intellectual delight. (Consider how he "explains" Saint Francis by the lust for power.) He ruthlessly disects all that we love; at times he seems downright cruel. For example, the chief function of the innocent child, little Phil, in *Point Counter Point*, is to be a striking contrast to lack of innocence. So the author lets him die in agony from spinal meningitis, and permits the greasy hypocrite, who has just driven an honest woman to suicide, to sport in the bathtub with his mistress. Thus the novel ends. "Two little children sitting at opposite ends of the big old-fashioned bath. . . . Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Of such as little Phil is the Kingdom of Heaven; but the earth, the author implies, is not run on those lines: it is a place where the wicked flourish and the innocent suffer. If one thinks about it, this is a pretty terrible indictment of humanity. But Mr. Huxley keeps us occupied rather with ideas than their emotional significance. And he is so clever in ludicrous contrasts that even though he ridicules things we feel a tenderness for, we cannot help laughing. He even makes it possible to read his books merely for amusement if one is disposed to ignore their grim implications.

Brave New World is extravagant enough, funny enough, sexy enough, to be enjoyed, at least by the sophisticated, in this way. It is told, for the most part, conventionally, without technical tricks; and it has a general scheme like that of an H. G. Wells romance.

It describes a Utopia of scientific and industrial civilization in the year 632 A.F. (After Ford). There Happiness is the goal of life; self-indulgence (in sex chiefly) is the Golden Rule; and all causes of unpleasantness are scientifically eliminated. For contrast the author brings in a "Savage" with a passion for nobility and strenuous self-de-

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nial, fed, curiously enough, upon a mixture of Shakespeare and Hopi customs. This "Savage" cannot abide Utopia, and neither can the author. But the "Savage" is made so much the fanatic that he represents an opposite extreme, not a reasonable mediation. Consequently when he goes grotesquely mad and hangs himself his fate does not signify very much. As a whole, indeed, the book is too fantastic to be taken very seriously.

For this reason its satire has less sting than that of earlier works. *Antic Hay* and *Point Counter Point* ridiculed actual conditions and typical persons. No matter how clever, satire seems gratuitous unless it does this. But *Brave New World* is two removes from actuality, and by the time we have thought through Utopia back to the tendencies of the present world which the author evidently wishes to ridicule, the point of his attack is somewhat blunted. And let him be as savage as he like, we sit easy in the knowledge that his Utopia is in no danger of materializing; his Utopians are perfectly impossible creatures. The book might in some ways be compared to *Gulliver's Travels*; but in this it differs, to its loss. When Swift through the mouths of his "horses" lashes human nature we wince because the strokes go home. But Huxley's Utopians have been so "conditioned" out of recognition as human beings that fling out upon them as he will our withers are unwrung. At most we are pleased that advocates of mass production, behaviourists, and faddists in "glandular therapy" are offered so brilliant a *reductio ad absurdum* of their theories.

But though his satire here is less biting than elsewhere, its range is wide enough. Its range is indicated in a discussion between His Fordship Mustapha Mond, one of the directors of Utopia, and the critics of that brave new world. "History is bunk", said "Our Ford"; and history is therefore banned in Utopia. Happiness, Mustapha explains, can be preserved only by living in the present. Art is forbidden for a like reason: it is unsettling. An art-form like tragedy, furthermore, is impossible because the materials of tragedy—aspiration, fear of death, passion, conflict, et cetera—do not exist.

These troubling things have been eliminated by various means, but most important of them is the substitution for parenthood of the mass production of babies. The human foetus is developed in a bottle. Vast numbers of identical twins can be produced by special treatment of the ovum. Each foetus is "conditioned" by injections and mechanical treatments so that it will come out "fated" to grow into one of five castes, from the large telligent Alphas to the puny morons, the Epsilons, who do the dirty work of Utopia. At the proper time each baby is "decanted"; thereafter it is reared in a factory by further "conditioning" until it matures trained both to do the work it was destined for and to prefer it to anything else. Epsilons are "conditioned" to dislike roses and picture-books; to enjoy the heat of furnace rooms and the acid fumes of manufactories. All castes are "conditioned" to dislike the other castes. Thus we see scientific determinism in its perfection.

It logically follows that democracy is an obsolete ideal. Castes are necessary not only for industry but to preserve peace. Twenty-two thousand Alphas, Mustapha tells the "Savage", were in the year 473 A. F. placed alone on the island of Cyprus as an experiment. In their common struggle to stay at the top of the social structure they nearly exterminated each other. "The optimum population", His Fordship concludes, "is modelled on the iceberg—eight-ninths below the waterline."

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Excess of emotion is prevented by use of a drug, "soma". Dissatisfaction is not only avoided; it is considered dangerous, for dissatisfaction means change, and "every change is a menace to stability". Even the Epsilons are so made that they enjoy their existence: "seven and a half hours of mild, unexhausting labour, and then the *soma* ration and games and unrestricted copulation and the feelies".

Science, even, from which all these blessings have flowed, is suppressed beyond what is needed to preserve the *status quo*. "Every discovery in pure science is potentially subversive." Religion is obsolete because it is unnecessary. People remain emotionally youthful (absorbed in games and love-making) until the end, and then die suddenly and painlessly. Philosophy is disposed of: Bradley "defined philosophy as the finding of bad reason for what one believes by instinct. As if one believed anything by instinct! One believes things because one has been conditioned to believe them. Finding bad reasons for what one believes for other bad reasons—that's philosophy".

Self-denial is forbidden: "industrial civilization is only possible when there's no self-denial. Self-indulgence up to the very limits imposed by hygiene and economics. Otherwise the wheels stop turning". And of nobility and heroism "civilization has absolutely no need. These things are symptoms of political inefficiency". All things that men now admire as high and noble are "incompatible with happiness". To be happy we must remain emotionally infantile, and only intelligent enough to do the work required of our caste.

Mr. Huxley, as we have said, is dissatisfied with this Utopia. But considering how he lays waste the pastures of human faith, what he would prefer to Science and Industry *in excelsis* remains untold. His scepticism leaves no firm ground to stand on. Yet it would seem that like most men he cannot remain forever in this attitude of negation. To do so he would need be less of a poet, a moralist, a human being, than he obviously is. And to be permanently important, a satire needs some sort of positive foundation in faith. But it can be without a creed and still be witty and ruthless. Early in the book two Alphas are described as flying toward the great crematorium where the dead are scientifically disposed of. Henry explains how the phosphorus thus liberated is carefully recovered for industrial purposes. They pass over a chimney, and the column of hot air shoots the helicopter upward. " 'What a marvellous switchback!' Lenina laughed delightedly. But Henry's tone was almost, for a moment, melancholy. 'Do you know what that switchback was?' he said. 'It was some human being finally and definitely disappearing. Going up in a squirt of hot gas.' " And with it go up, by implication, the Christian belief in the soul of man ascending to heaven, all human longing for immortality, and even the dignity with which we try to invest death. The symbolism has that grotesque and cruel aptness for which this author has a positive genius.

ALAN REYNOLDS THOMPSON

BROTHERS *by L. A. G. Strong* (KNOPF. $2.50)

MR. STRONG is a versatile writer, and seems on the road to a reputation. He has written poetry, criticism, short stories, and novels. *The Garden,* to be sure, is a novel only by reason of not being anything else. It is a pleasantly and sympathetically written series of reminiscences of a boyhood, which, if they are not pretty much all autobiographical,

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give a remarkable impression of being so. *Brothers,* which is now being hailed by British critics with admiring phrases, is similar to *The Garden* in lack of structure, in entertaining anecdotes (mostly about fishing), and in vivid characterizations. But it is as great a contrast as possible in its central interest. Life was tenderly cultivated in *The Garden*; in this it grows stunted and misshapen among rocks and storms. This is the attempt of a literary man to convey the sharp, bitter tang of living for certain almost barbaric fisher-folk on the west coast of Scotland.

Mr. Strong's style, if a bit self-conscious, is a musical and expressive medium. The passages of scenic description are very well done. An occasional vivid metaphor sticks in the mind: the rain falling "like the swaths from a scythe"; the whirlpools set up by oars like "swirling pockmarks"; a cumulus cloud like "a great orange cauliflower". In his narrative he is simple and swift. He observes his people shrewdly, gives us occasional passages of introspection when useful, handles only the high points in their careers, and avoids any betrayal of personal feeling. Like so many modern novelists he would be objective at all times—simple, sensuous, and objective. Passion he leaves to his characters.

The first half of the book is a series of sketches of highland life: moonshining, the barbaric punishment of an informer, fishing, drinking scenes, odd customs such as the contests in cursing and in rowing between hostile families, superstitions, and the primitive tradition of clannishness and family pride, with its dignity, its virtue of blind loyalty, and its vices of narrowness and hate. A priest unfrocked for unchastity preaches in his cups a sermon of grotesque mediaeval horror against the sin that has betrayed him. A Rabelaisian old sea captain heads a crew of roisterers whose jollity is in striking contrast to the Scotch dourness about them. The bitter climate is put through its paces. Men go about their hard tasks silent, driven inward to a dumb, half-animal existence; their religion becomes inexorable and harsh; their passions are sternly suppressed, but at times break violently out. Their lives appear comic occasionally; but are much more attractive to the author's romantic tastes as material for grimly sombre effects.

Of the two brothers who give the novel its title Peter is a crafty coward who as he ages grows more and more despicable; Fergus is a thick-witted giant, with a dog's animal cunning at physical action, a dog's dumb affection, blind fidelity, and blind hostility to his master's enemies. Toward the second half the novel takes on greater continuity and unity as Fergus becomes more and more involved; and violence and wickedness are let loose. The author is in the romantic tradition, and shrouds his horrors in "atmosphere"; he also has a fondness for their details.

One can see the author's intention. The setting called to him for a drama of dark deeds; he would set this drama solidly in homely and vivid realism, but center it in primitive passion; he would make his chief character a strong, silent man of a more primitive and original sort than the hero of the Western story, though living in the same century. The setting and the elements were to isolate the action from the measured life of civilization and give it a timeless quality. The book was to be a romance of the darkling sort, approaching tragedy.

And it was to avoid romantic clichés. For example, the hero saves the heroine in a bloody hand-to-hand fight from her would-be ravisher; but they don't fall into each other's arms. Instead she becomes the rav-

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isher's mistress. Later the hero's passions are aroused for her and she succumbs to him; but he doesn't marry her: he murders her.

Now this is avoiding the cliché, with a vengeance. The only difficulty with it, apart from its unpleasantness, is that it is unmotivated. The whole action leading up to and following the murder is enveloped in a Scotch mist. Why did Peter, villain though he was, want to put Mary to death? Was it because, after he had lusted for years after her, he finally gained his desire? How could Fergus be so easily persuaded to do the deed? Was it because he was in love with Mary, although restrained by religious scruples? Of course Peter tells him the honour of the family is at stake. But why does it never occur to him that a more honourable as well as a pleasanter expedient would be to marry her? Mary had turned to other men because Fergus would never look at her; now he rows her out into the strait, and when, in the fulness of her heart, she is confessing her love for him, he pitches her into the water. He then returns to land, sleeps sound, and rises the next day calm and conscience-free. Does the author expect us to believe that? And if he does, does he also expect us to regard Fergus as the strong, silent hero? Then Fergus discovers that his brother has used him as a cat's-paw and betrayed him to the law. His reaction to this is to resign himself, feeling that he must suffer for the sins of the family. (These are sins of lust, not murder, be it understood.) Does the author expect us to believe that also?

Of course there are suggestions of motivation: a father's dying words, the priest's sermon, a grim and superstitious religion, Fergus's dog-like disposition, and the dim shadows, in the background, of things Freudian—suppression of desires, complexes, and such. But they leave us unconvinced. Let us freely confess the limitations of our acquaintance with barbaric Highlanders; even so the Scotch are human under their suppressions. There are no clichés in the climax of this novel; there is also no probability. And though no self-respecting critic should ever confess to wishing an attractive and badly abused heroine to live happily, we confess to feeling distress at the senseless taking-off of Mary.

Brothers begins in a style that reminds us of Hardy, which is high praise; but although Hardy did at times indulge in gruesome melodrama, he built his plots symmetrically and inevitably, like the architect he was. Hardy also founded his imagined action upon a philosophy; gloomy though it was, it was understandable and significant.

ALAN REYNOLDS THOMPSON

THE END OF DESIRE *by Robert Herrick* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $2.50)

DOCTOR SERENA MASSEY, in *The End of Desire*, is the most odious heroine in all fiction; Becky Sharp is downright lovable beside her. The core of Robert Herrick's latest novel is the story of the relationship between middle-aged lovers (a psychiatrist and an expert in abnormal psychology; Mr. Herrick's little joke) to which the man brings ardour, tenderness and fidelity, and the woman nothing at all. The abnormal psychologist has "cool scientific detachment, remarkable erudition and subtlety in analysis"; she has also, according to her creator, wit and charm. But the wit and charm take place off-stage, and she goes through the pages of the book an unmitigated monster of selfishness, an exponent of the type of exacerbated feminism that is so afraid of masculine domination that it cannot give one grain of normal human feeling to any man. Monstrous as she is, Serena's

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name is legion. Mr. Herrick must have been observing minutely, for years past, women who find "sex life" a more satisfactorily exact term than "love", and he has drawn their archetype with a kind of infuriated thoroughness.

Serena blocks every attempt her lover makes to bring them into closer union; the little country house he has hoped to turn into a home she uses as a retreat to write her books in; she humiliates him before her friends; she refuses to marry him when the way is made clear for marriage, and affronts him by her sly ingenuity in defending their "privacy"; she betrays him professionally in favour of the man who is to be his successor as her lover; and finally, she very nearly kills him as the result of one last selfish caprice.

These experts in the human heart and mind fail as signally in their rôle as parents as they do in love. Serena has three children, Redfield a son, and beyond providing them with care and education, they have done nothing for them. Redfield, to be sure, like any simpler father, has tried honestly to pass on the knowledge he has found valuable, but his son is a spiritual mediocrity, and has been more harmed than helped by his father's insistence on uncongenial ideals. The record of Serena's failure makes painful reading, and the one satisfaction that Redfield is allowed in the book is his success in helping the children of his mistress.

There is a great deal more than mere story in the book. Mr. Herrick uses it as a vehicle for satires on liberal weeklies, on overrated authors, on congresses called to consider sexual problems, on false spiritual leaders, which are even more successful than his satire on the feminist in love. For New Yorkers, at least, he has provided a gallery of recognizable portraits that can be identified with unholy joy.

The book's great flaw is the character of its hero. Redfield is a masculine version of Patient Griselda, so exasperatingly forbearing that one completely loses sympathy with him. Three years is too long a period to persevere in trying to get blood from a stone, and for all his high-mindedness and intelligence, Redfield, one feels, is a good bit of a simpleton.

DOROTHEA BRANDE

LOADS OF LOVE *by Anne Parrish* (HARPERS. $2.50)

BESSIE PLUMMER, of Anne Parrish's *Loads of Love*, is less odious than deplorable. Bessie is a good-hearted vulgarian with money, young, fat, thick-skinned, condescending, stupid as a sheep and appallingly energetic. Around herself she gathers a group who accept her hospitality for more or less venial motives. None of them, it is safe to say, would gravitate to Bessie if she were not in a position to bestow largess, and so, although the group that gathers at "Swan's Nest", Bessie's country place, has its quota of fawning inferiors, it includes also two gifted young people who have compromised with their contempt to the end of getting inexpensive recreation.

Whether or not it was Miss Parrish's intention to show that even this subtle corruption carries the seeds of its own punishment within it, that is what the story comes to. Miss Parrish refrains so carefully from intruding into her own pages that it is a little difficult to guess just what was in her mind. At any rate, Bessie is not mere innocuous good-heartedness. Her total inability to understand the people around her, her tendency to translate all situations in terms of easy platitude—anyone not downright rude to Bessie is "a perfect peach"; all babies are "dear little babies", usually "so fat they look as though they had strings tied around their little wrists"—her restless energy and vanity

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make her very much what one of the characters calls her, a senseless natural force that frequently precipitates disaster.

Katherine, an artist, and Edward, a writer, fall in love; less, perhaps, because of any real suitability they have for each other than because they are set off from Bessie's other guests by their superior sensibility. But Edward is the only son of an adoring mother, and Katherine's rather exigent standards of workmanship trouble him, so that when Bessie brings a native girl into the house as a sort of combination housekeeper and fellow guest, Edward succumbs to her sweetness and unexacting admiration.

Here, as if by some confusion in her conception of the book, Miss Parrish seems to suggest that if it had not been for Bessie's blundering stupidity Katherine and Edward might have adjusted their differences and married; Bessie, at any rate, wrecks the automobile in which Edward is hastening toward Katherine, and Bessie fails, in her letter to Katherine, to tell her of Edward's intention. So it is the little "native", Jenny, who nurses Edward back to health and marries him. Then Bessie's stupidity drowns Edward.

Before quarrelling sharply with Miss Parrish it is only fair to set down a few of her many virtues. The story goes quickly and surely from the first page to the last, and it is engrossing. Every character in the book is alive; Bessie is at once so nauseating and so ludicrous that one winces and laughs simultaneously whenever she appears. (Jenny, the one character in the book who ever really loved and admired Bessie, is a little too much the noble child of nature for my taste, but she is well done.) Better dialogue than Miss Parrish writes cannot be written, and her humour, sometimes malicious, sometimes kindly, is unflagging. But the themes she chooses, not only in *Loads of Love* but in all her books, seem to me to demand the abandonment of the detachment which she so scrupulously observes. Bessie, for example, either is or is not the villain of the piece, and Miss Parrish seems never to have made up her mind; the title and several side remarks from various characters, with which the author seems to concur, imply that Miss Parrish thinks she is; but you no sooner have the clue than it is snatched away from you by subtly psycho-analytic explanations of Bessie's character. The same complaint can be lodged against every person in the book, except the excellently sketched supernumeraries. They first are, and then are not, shown as responsible for their mistakes and successes. It is easy to contend that "life is like that", and that Miss Parrish belongs to the school that believes *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*, but actually she never takes a stand, and wavers forever between explanations by free will and explanations by determinism. Her books are at war internally, and over a fundamental issue.

Anne Parrish is so good that one regrets her failings acutely. Presumptuous as it may sound, since she already counts her readers by thousands, I believe that if Miss Parrish would allow herself, in just one book, to show candid partisanship, she would be one of the most significant, as well as one of the most popular, writers of the day.

DOROTHEA BRANDE

THE APES OF GOD *by Wyndham Lewis* (MCBRIDE. $3.00)

THE greatest novels the twentieth century has so far produced, it is generally agreed, are James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. With the publication of Wyndham Lewis's *The Apes of God*, a third takes its place among them, and

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can claim superiority so far as intellectual content is concerned. The works of Joyce and Proust are distinguished as remarkably complete expressions of the romantic *malaise*, but Mr. Lewis's book is distinguished for the vigour and pertinence of its attack on certain manifestations of that sickness. The relative amount of humour in *Remembrance of Things Past* is small; in *Ulysses* the humour is not entirely mature, consisting in large part of blasphemy and obscenity; but in *The Apes of God* the humour is all-pervasive and stings like a whip of scorpions because it is founded on able thought. Gorham Munson has said our time would afford excellent material for someone to write another *Of Human Folly*. Mr. Lewis has risen to the occasion and availed himself of a group where folly, if not at its most obvious, is at least at its most pretentious; he has taken the present world of art, analyzed the motives behind its productions, pictured the gigantic absurdity of its inhabitants as they self-consciously follow all their pursuits, and woven his observations into a work of great vigour and artistic surety. In *The Apes of God* he has sent a young Irish "genius", under the aegis of an indefatigable discoverer of geniuses, through the English world of culture (not in Arnold's sense, nor in any other proper sense), and shown us, as we follow the course of the bright young man (surely one of the stupidest characters in fiction), the present dwellers on Parnassus—those who are wealthy, those who are sexual experimentalists, those who are infantile, those who are toadies, and those—which means most of them—who are a little of all. We attend the rising of an old Victorian belle; we spy on the sorry amours of an undersized inhabitant of Bloomsbury; we have tea with a host of Lesbians; we are present at a Lenten party that is easily comparable to the banquet of Trimalchio; and the guide who leads us to these scenes does not comment amusedly on the foibles of the naughty children to be found there: he pictures with them with the properly ferocious bitterness of one who sees what he holds dearest being profaned.

It is pretty common knowledge, though it is not commonly acted upon, that satire fails when it is attempted with no positive basis; disgust with the world that sees no possibility of a better world had better remain mute. Naturally, the satirist need not offer Utopia; that is left for such objects of satire as H. G. Wells; but the satirist must be certain that the removal of what causes him disgust will result in a better world. Wyndham Lewis wants removed from the world those whom he calls the apes of God, that the artist may be free to follow his calling, for

> . . . by adopting the life of the artist the rich have not learnt more about art, and they respect it less. With their irresponsible "bohemian" life they have left behind their "responsibilities"—a little culture among the rest. Indeed they are almost as crudely ignorant as is the traditional painter. Besides—living in cafés, studios and "artistic" flats—they are all "artists" in a sense themselves. They have made the great discovery that everyone wielding a brush or pen is not a "genius", any more than they are. But they have absorbed a good deal of the envy of those who are not "geniuses" for those who are (having in a sense placed themselves upon the same level) —and the contempt of those who are, for those who are not. The result is that they abominate good art as much as bad artists do, *and* have as much contempt for bad art as have good artists! There is more indifference to and often hatred of every form of art in these pseudo-artistic circles . . . than in all the rest of the world put together.

It is into the haunts of these people, who try to gain a distinction they do not possess by practising something in which they have no sincere interest, that Mr. Lewis goes, with

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more deadly effect than any hunter in an African jungle. The apes whom he seeks out are not the chattering monkeys that everyone has recognized for more noise than body; he is not questing after the obvious charlatans, the frequenters of artistic teas and the literary camp-followers; he is after those whom we of today have mistaken for the true disciples of Apollo, just as in mediaeval times certain demons deceived people into thinking them the true God. The desire of the ape is to avoid responsibility but enjoy all the benefits accruing to great effort; and since these benefits are gained by setting oneself above the run of people (who are incapable of great effort), the ape achieves his distinction by being a homosexual or an artist—or both, since they have a certain identity in his mind. If some remnant of conscience remains to plague him, pointing out that he has not accomplished much, he looks upon himself as a child; for children have no responsibilities yet most of the things they do seem to engage attention.

Mr. Lewis looks at his characters through a microscope, tracing all the tortuous complexity of their insincerity and self-adoration. But it is not with isolated tissues that he deals; his observations are incorporated into a vast scheme and afford us that sense of largeness we feel when we see a small thing fitted into its correct place in the order of existence. In the world depicted in this book, things do not, of course, stand in their rightful places—here is confusion and dislocation of values—but it is Mr. Lewis's art that reveals this to us and indicates what the proper situation should be. Mr. Lewis has devoted a great deal of space to his microscopy, and the book probably contains as much physical description as any novel in English; and the description cannot be skipped: the story moves forward with its force. Mr. Lewis is celebrated as a painter, and he follows the good man in that craft by suggesting something beyond the immediate surface he reveals:

> Dick charlestoning as he stood, the two knots of his fist deeply entrenched in the gnarled Oxford bags to which he now imparted a ponderous molten shiver, Gog or Magog turned dervish . . . flung his body into a sofa (which gasped in its wheezy bowels) and then slightly eructated, with a heavy zigzag movement up his body, the back of his flat occiput becoming for a moment as stiff as a poker—from hair en brosse, flourishing straight up into the air in the same plane as his neck, and so in a sheer undeviating drop to his coccyx, against the high-backed squatting apparatus to which he had brutally committed his person. Once more a ball of wind made its way irresistibly up his neck. His trunk shook, contracted and relaxed, to assist the slight explosion.

Or there is a scene, in which an old woman moves from one room to another, that has the massive strength of the progress of the Car of Juggernaut. When we have not the agile leaping of the author's mind to bind his diverse materials into a whole, we have this agitation of bodies—which is more than a painter's interest in appearances: because these people are never sincere, their bodily actions become more revealing than those of the honest person, and in describing their varying postures Mr. Lewis presents their affectations in their last absurd reduction. And when we are shown the characters' interiors, we feel much the same reaction that comes on the revelation of the thoughts that really lie behind the brow of a hypocrite.

The tendency of the novel for the past hundred years has been more and more to deal with philosophical subjects. In *The Apes of God* this progress has gone as far as it is likely to go for some time; ideas are the true protagonists, and they are brought to

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us, as are all ideas on this earth, in the flesh: one fairly feels the physical impact of opposing ideologies. Wyndham Lewis succeeds in making the word flesh. To the English reader, familiar with the models Mr. Lewis has used, each character may be more than the embodiment of a current attitude and have a particular existence, but this need not make the character obscure to the American reader, who can recognize the truth of the portraiture in its art alone. However, there are several characters in the work whose significance and relationship to the total structure remain obscure. There is the enigmatic Albino, Horace Zagreus, who so ably repeats and applies the ideals of a mysterious Pierpoint whom we never meet (ideas identical with those expressed in Mr. Lewis's own polemics) that we are inclined to grant him more intelligence than is compatible with being an ape. It may be the author's intention to show that the worst of apes assumes the guise of the anti-ape—which is surely true. There is a passage employing a great deal of occult symbolism in which Mr. Lewis falls into James Joyce's vice of assuming a very specialized learning on the part of the reader. Starr-Smith, the black-shirted lieutenant of Pierpoint, is interesting as an echo of Pierpoint's ideas, but he also has the irritating uncertainty of an echo. If the absurd marriage with which the book ends (disregarding the very meaningful final paragraph) has any other interpretation than its inherent absurdity, it misses the present reviewer. But these are minor objections: they do not prevent us from learning what terrible shams the world of art harbours today, nor do they prevent us from witnessing an attack on falsity and stupidity that is the equal of any in English literature.

While its final effect is its own explanation, the style of this book is sufficiently unusual to deserve comment. There is a certain rhythmical similarity to the prose of James Joyce—which may well claim a common ancestry in the writing of Laurence Sterne. The use of rhetoric by both men is also much the same; they seem to employ their devices on the spur of the moment rather than by premeditation. When we compare both of them with Proust, we are struck with the fact that Proust's sentences are like those series of Chinese boxes one within the other, while the sentences of Joyce and Mr. Lewis are more like chains, each link of which was forged as the need arose. This does not mean that the Englishmen are careless workers; the infinite pains of Joyce with his writing are legendary, and Mr. Lewis's style is perhaps the ideal vehicle for his thoughts. Speaking of another writer, Irving Babbitt has denied that "the aim of art is to exaggerate the clutter and incoherency of the mundane spectacle instead of eliciting its deeper meaning". Such exaggeration, though he probably does not think of it as exaggeration, is Joyce's aim, but the especial quality of Mr. Lewis's style comes from his attempt to display the deeper meaning in the sequence and with the associations with which it presents itself to his mind. Mr. Lewis's words reveal the order and quality of his thought as it first occurs in his mind; he is obscure at times because his nexus is not obvious, though it does exist; his writing impresses us with an enormous vitality because it is only at one remove from life: the thought is fairly poured on the page, and, so long as the thought is good, the style will not suffer for it. Initially, it must be admitted, the style is odd and difficult, but anyone who can follow a slightly involved train of thought will overcome the difficulty, and the oddity is only the oddity of truly great work.

GEOFFREY STONE

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FLESH IS HEIR *by Lincoln Kirstein*
(BREWER, WARREN & PUTNAM. $2.50)

THE novel about the young man finding himself is usually interesting if the young man described is sensitive and intelligent: his sensitivity and intelligence justify the book despite the thinness of the subject matter, and make the reader willing to give his attention where unusual action or writing is absent. When, as in the present book, the writing is competent, there is all the more reason why the book should provide a pleasant evening. Roger Baum is the hero of *Flesh is Heir* and, at least indirectly, we see all the events of the story through his eyes (with the exception of one paragraph that considerably mars the end of the book). Roger is Jewish, rich, and of a mildly inquiring nature; none of these attributes moves him to much pain or action; his interest in painting and the ballet provides the enthusiasm necessary to continue life. Until the final section of the book, life puzzles him vaguely and we feel that he is searching for some unity in it, but he does not possess the requisite inner conflict to make the search dramatic. If the title is supposed to bring to mind the ills to which flesh is heir, Roger seems to suffer from very few of them, either those that attend the necessity of keeping the flesh provided for or those that the flesh visits on the spirit immured in it. Perhaps Roger does not suffer from the first because his wealth can provide against them, from the second because the realm of thought is for him not one in which clarity must be gained at any cost. In the end Roger solves his problems by coming to accept vitality, action, joy in life. This conclusion may not be philosophically very tenable (and indeed the history of literature is littered with the cracked skulls of those who thought to live by life alone) but it seems adequate to the present case, for if nothing but the normal human inertia stands in the way of accepting life, why not accept it?

The book is written in a subdued key and is free from the excursions into the inner consciousness that are common to first novels—for which latter we may be thankful, since the one or two instances that do occur are not promising. There are no gaucheries of construction nor any attempts at fine writing, so the inevitably commonplace sections of the story do not anger us by being pretentious. Far more than is necessary to avoid confusion Mr. Kirstein designates Roger by the proper noun rather than the pronoun. Joyce used this device in the early part of the *Portrait* to give the prose an infantile character; it has the same effect in Mr. Kirstein's work but serves no purpose. It is plainly unintentional, for on page 261 there is a reference to "a boy of twenty-seven or eight". The publishers are insistent that the book is "essentially romantic and hopeful in its conception of life", not disillusioned and hysterical like the literature of the past decade. Though the statement does not contain the strong contrast they obviously think it does, it is an adequate description of the book.

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(*Continued from page 673*)

interesting to us of his time. How much more so to those who shall follow us when events of this era may be obscure. But maybe Mr. Symington has this chapter in reserve for a future volume.

The Demand for First Editions

An old favourite of the collecting world, Harrison Ainsworth, comes into prominence in this month's table of average weekly demands in England (on behalf of both American and English collectors) for the First Editions of modern authors. The collected authors for whose "Firsts" there was considerable demand although just outside the minimum of the table were Bulwer Lytton, George Meredith, Lewis Carroll, W. H. Hudson, H. G. Wells, and A. P. Herbert; with the names of Frank Harris and Gordon Craig the most frequent of the more newly collected ones. The American author most in request was Washington Irving. It may be noted that in the wide interest in Hugh Walpole's First Editions, there was much concentration on two titles, *Rogue Herries* and *Judith Paris*—the two novels so far published of his *Lake District Series*—in which, it is considered, is his most ambitious and successful work so far. This table is compiled from various sources, and the usual reservation is made as to its indicative value because there are many authors like Byron, Keats, Shelley, and Lamb whose "Firsts" are keenly sought although less frequently appearing in published desiderata:

Harrison Ainsworth	23
Kate Greenaway	20
John Galsworthy	18
D. H. Lawrence	16
Charles Dickens	15
Hugh Walpole	15
Somerset Maugham	14
Anthony Trollope	14
Thomas Hardy	13
R. L. Stevenson	13
Joseph Conrad	12
G. B. Shaw	12
Maurice Hewlett	11
Sir Rider Haggard	10

X. Y. Z.

Books and MSS in the Sale-rooms

The First English Tragedy in Blank Verse—Richard II Complete—American Letters—Authors in Trouble—Association Items

One of the best of this season's sales produced a copy of the first authorized edition of Thomas Norton's *The Tragedie of Ferrex and Porrex*; imprinted at London by John Daye (1570), which sold for $1700. I have given the description as catalogued; but the play is more often known as *The Tragedie of Gorboduc*, having been jointly written by Thomas Sackville (first Earl of Dorset)—who had the task of breaking the news to Mary Queen of Scots of the sentence of death passed on her—and Norton. The play was performed before Queen Elizabeth on Twelfth Night, 1561. It is the first regular English tragedy and the second important essay in English blank verse after Surrey's specimens of the *Æneid*. The importance of this joint work is obvious. Garnett and Gosse summed it up with admirable brevity in stating that but for blank verse the English stage would never have possessed a poetical drama. If this price is given at such a time for the first authorized edition, a black-letter, it is an interesting speculation as to the value of the

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earlier and corrupt edition printed without the authors' permission in 1565, of which *only one copy* is recorded.

The next work to be sold after this momentous Sackville-Norton play was a fine copy in "genuine condition throughout" of a copy of the first complete edition of Shakespeare's *Tragedie of King Richard the Second* (1608), which realized $3,400. Although only the Fourth Edition (1st issue), in it was printed for the first time the Deposition scene omitted for political reasons from the quartos published in Elizabeth's reign, the scene being 165 lines long. Only five other copies are known of this complete edition. These treasures and a fine copy of Ptolemy's celebrated early Atlas *Cosmographia* (1486) at $2,200, were the "big game" of the sale; but there were attractive captures by the smaller purses. A chained book (with brass bosses, clasps, original staple and chain complete) changed ownership at $160—it was a copy of the *Cornucopiae* of Perotti (folio, Strasburg: 1505) from the library of the Clarisses at Trèves. A few lots later twelve dollars secured the *Rejoinder to the Rev. Mr. Robert Abercrombie's late Remarks on a fair Narrative of the Proceedings of the Presbytery of Boston, against himself* (Boston: 1758). But more promising was a collection of nineteen autograph letters and documents signed by prominent men of the War of Independence, including a letter from Richard Penn, Lieutenant-Governor of Pennsylvania, stating: "I had rather convince one honest man of the Justice of the American Cause than ten thousand Macaronies, for which purpose I send you the enclos'd Pamphlet". This lot, which occupied a whole page of the catalogue, realized $60—which shows the opportunities now available in the auction-rooms. Autograph letters formed a large part of this sale. $250 was paid for a fine one from Washington about the marriage of Nelly

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Custis ("I inform you that Friday next is to make her and Lewis one flesh & one bone"); $35 for one from Carlyle to his wife ("the first thing I do after washing my face, is to write you account of myself. My poor little Goody, to whom else can I write my sorrows, my complaints, my joys if I had any considerable? Bad luck to that quavering, tinkling musical jackass . . . who scared us out of one room with his tobacco, and is now singing all over the house, Sabbath tho' it is, and interrupting me now"). "Poor little Goody" had her own sorrows and complaints. So had Thackeray in another letter a few lots later, announcing that he had been ordered to lie in bed and drink barley and water instead of claret for a week"—which was bad news, although the missive sold for $100. A Pasteur letter at $32; a series of twelve from De Quincey in trouble over his rent, etc., at $85; and one from historian Gibbon at $12. But even in these upside-down times perhaps the items which remain steadiest to their value are the association books. Here, for example, was Mrs. Piozzi's own copy of her *Letters to and from the late Samuel Johnson* (1788), containing her marginal notes and corrections, with blanks for names filled up in numerous places. This brought $360. Even a presentation copy to Mme de Pompadour from the translator, Poinsinet, of his *Anacreon* (sold as a binding) went to $100. In another sale was the 39-page MS of Voltaire's *Memoranda, Anecdotes, and Notes* written while he was in England (*circa* 1727), including a number of rather indecorous stories and verses; which realized $650. But good MSS and association books are hard to come by. They are, as a matter of fact, very much rarer than even holograph letters of literary importance. (As in last month's Department, all English prices mentioned are given in dollars at par.)

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BON VOYAGE

With Wanderlust Venturers Far from the 5:15

BY ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE

KIPLING in his poem *Farewell Romance* called it the 9:15. In the case of Margaret Matches it was the 5:55 in the evening and the 7:59 in the morning. But a wanderlust born of previous experiences in Mexico and the Antilles, moved her to forsake the life of Commutia, and, starting for Australia on a freighter, to proceed thence to the adventures described in *Savage Paradise* (Century. $4.00).

From Sydney, which she sums up as "something of a Yankee with a Cockney accent", she journeyed to Rabaul in New Guinea to share the life of the strange company of the South Seas. Some of her pen-portraits of the men and women with whom she came into contact are very much out of the usual. For example, there was the mysterious Mrs. Jessaby, a kind of Mrs. Hauksbee of the Pacific though rather more *déclassée* than the Kipling lady, a woman in the "ageless forties", the outstanding shunned and envied personality of Rabaul. What a novel there was in Mrs. Jessaby! Writing of the pidgin English which is the universal language between white men and Chinese and natives in the South Seas, Miss Matches tells of its key-word "maskee", which means "never mind", and of the classic of pidgin English, the phrase meaning a piano: "big-fella-bokis-you-fight-him-'e-cry".

No revolt from the routine of the 5:15 took Lee S. Crandall, Curator of Birds, New York Zoological Park, to New Guinea and the experiences of *Paradise Quest* (Scribner's. $3.50). It was all part of the day's work. The Park lacked a proper collection of birds of paradise. The one thing to do was to go and get it. So, crossing the continent, Mr. Crandall sailed from San Francisco for Australia in August 1928, and in the following October from the deck of the *Morinda*, the only steamer plying between Sydney and Port Morseby, sighted the low hills of New Guinea. Then months of hardship, danger, and high adventure, met with the glow of the true naturalist. The reward of the work came when in March 1929, the *Canadian Cruiser*, forty-four days out of Sydney, nosed her way to her berth in Gowanus Bay, South Brooklyn. The ship's burlap-lined smoking-room housed forty birds of paradise, as well as two hundred other feathered creatures.

Two thousand miles west of the coast of Chili there is a real mysterious island far more extraordinary than the "mysterious island" of Jules Verne's fancy. One of the most inaccessible spots on earth, cut off from all communication with the outside world save for the ship that once a year comes venturing from the Chilean coast to make sure that its naked mountains still rise above the sea, it is, and always has been, a region of evil mystery and forbidding legend. To this island Robert Casey, poet, scientist, and explorer sailed from Tahiti. *Easter Island: Home of the Scornful Gods* (Bobbs, Merrill. $4.00), transports the reader far from the 5:15. Since the days of Cook the island has always inspired terror. Its sinister reputation

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